

# THE STRAITS TIMES

Life  
Films  
for the  
festive  
season  
D2&3



Business  
S'pore growing  
high-tech firms  
C1&2





Opinion  
Why import  
art fairs?  
A24

Top of the News HIV data loss:  
Questions remain A8&9



Opinion  
S'pore's  
image  
dented  
A26

Top of the News New home for Elections Department A7 • Home Four hotels fined for anti-competitive behaviour B1

## Big revamp to turn Orchard into a more lively street

New concepts to boost 4 sub-precincts; part of road may go car-free to link green spaces

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

Travelling from one end of Orchard Road to the other will eventually be a very different experience, as plans are afoot to transform the 2.4km stretch into a more lively street with different offerings in each of its four sub-precincts.

Part of the road may also go car-free to connect green spaces at the Istana Park, Dhoby Ghaut Green and the open space at Plaza Singapura, and turn it into a garden oasis.

These were among the proposed plans to rejuvenate Singapore's shopping belt unveiled yesterday,

following a six-month study and consultations with stakeholders.

In a joint statement, the Singapore Tourism Board, Urban Redevelopment Authority and National Parks Board (NParks) said new retail concepts, attractions, entertainment and events will be introduced to the Tanglin, Somerset, Orchard and Dhoby Ghaut sub-precincts to strengthen Orchard Road's position as a lifestyle destination.

The heart of Orchard Road will remain the retail core, with more mixed-use developments to be built on vacant parcels of state land along Orchard Boulevard.

Starting in April, the Orchard

Road Business Association will begin a year-long trial to bring activities, such as retail and food and beverage pop-ups and arts and entertainment events, to the pedestrian walkways along the street.

Side streets such as Killiney Road and Orchard Turn will also be enhanced for better connectivity, while elevated link bridges may be built to make it easier for visitors to cross the junctions of Orchard and Paterson roads, the agencies said.

Dhoby Ghaut will be a green zone with family-friendly attractions such as outdoor playgrounds and sheltered event venues.

Tanglin will be branded a mixed-use neighbourhood with arts and artisanal choices, with the conserved Tudor Court, for example, housing more arts and cultural offerings.

Somerset will strengthen its position

as a youth hub with new lifestyle options and the possible transformation of the Grange Road open-air carpark into a dedicated events space, the agencies said.

To "bring back the Orchard", NParks is also looking to plant more trees and shrubs along Orchard Road, starting next year, with a different colour palette for each sub-precinct.

Experts say that the ideas are a good move, but the real transformation needs to happen inside the street's malls.

Plans to rejuvenate Orchard Road were first announced in 2017 by then Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran. These included using state land for pop-up concepts and events, creating a local retail showcase and making the street more pedestrian-friendly.

Speaking yesterday at the launch of Design Orchard, the realisation of the local retail and incubation space, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing said that Orchard Road has come a long way from its days as a nutmeg and clove plantation, and must continue to be a place of innovation and evolution.

Addressing building owners in the audience, he said that they should not feel constrained by the current rules when coming up with new concepts.

"Orchard Road is not a 2.4(km) IPPT run; we are not aiming for people to pass through Orchard Road in five or 10 minutes. We want people to come here, linger and make sure that they have a different experience at each and every turn," he said, referring to the Individual Physical Proficiency Test.

A public exhibition on the future plans for Orchard Road is being held at Orchard Fountain Corner beside 313@Somerset for two weeks – starting yesterday and lasting until Feb 13 – to gather feedback. Details on the plans and a feedback channel will be available until May 31 at <https://ura.sg/orchardrd>

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6

## US report warns of military build-up in South China Sea

An annual US intelligence assessment of global trends released on Tuesday warned that China is likely to continue boosting its maritime presence in the South China Sea and building military and dual-use infrastructure on the Spratly Islands.

China seeks to achieve effective control over its claimed waters, compel South-east Asian claimants to acquiesce to its claims and bolster its narrative in the region that the US is in decline and China's pre-eminence is inevitable, added the report.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, asked about the assessment, questioned why Washington felt insecure as the top superpower, and urged it to set aside its "zero-sum" understanding of security.

SEE WORLD A10

## Budget help for the underprivileged

The Singapore Budget, which will be presented on Feb 18 by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, will cover social programmes that focus on the elderly, healthcare and education as well as pay special attention to helping the disadvantaged and underprivileged.

Second Minister for Finance and Education Indranee Rajah said at an event yesterday: "We are putting special focus on how we can help those who are underprivileged, from a disadvantaged background, and the Uplift committee (Uplifting Pupils in Life and Inspiring Families Taskforce) will be a part of that."

Meanwhile, a pre-Budget survey by government feedback arm Reach found that a main concern among Singaporeans is getting access to affordable, quality healthcare.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4

## Brrr, big chill hits US Midwest

The shores of Lake Michigan near Montrose Beach in Chicago was a sea of white after a blast of Arctic air from the polar vortex brought dangerous, bone-chilling cold to a wide swathe of the United States on Tuesday.

The Midwest was the hardest-hit by the sub-zero temperatures, which the authorities say could be life-threatening.

The mercury fell to as low as minus 18 deg C in Chicago, while the temperatures tumbled to a frigid minus 29 deg C in Minneapolis. As much as 60cm of snow was forecast in Wisconsin.

Parts of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan were filled with chunks of ice as a result of the brutal cold.

Many cities in the Midwest have opened warming shelters for the tens of millions of people who will be affected. PHOTO: NYTIMES

SEE WORLD A22



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# 10 must-reads for today

## 1 More attacks expected

The church bombing in the southern Philippines this week may just be a harbinger of the migration of militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria from the Middle East to South-east Asia. Some analysts also see the attack as revenge for the Philippines' quelling of the siege of Marawi by Islamic militants in 2017. **WORLD A18**



Mourners sitting on a hearse during the funeral procession for a victim of the Jan 27 church bombing in Jolo, in Sulu province. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## 2 Big revamp for Orchard Rd

Plans are afoot to transform Orchard Road into a more lively street with different offerings in each of its four sub-precincts. Part of the 2.4km stretch may also go car-free. These are among the proposed plans to rejuvenate the shopping belt following a six-month study and consultations with stakeholders. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

## 3 Ideas on helping seniors

A proposal to increase the Central Provident Fund contribution rates for workers above the age of 55 is among several recommendations that have been submitted to the Government. The recommendations by the People's Action Party Seniors Group are on supporting seniors as they work, retire and live. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

## 4 Israel's cyber-power push

Israel's ambition to become one of the five cyber powers of the world requires the convergence of military intelligence, academia and industry, said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The formula sees military men work with business partners on start-up ideas. **WORLD A21**



Visitors wearing virtual reality headsets during an activity at the Cybertech 2019 conference in Tel Aviv. PHOTO: REUTERS

## 5 Why import art fairs?

What lies ahead after the exit of Art Stage Singapore and the international name associated with it? Another international fair is coming here, but is that the way forward or should local artists and talent be promoted, asks arts correspondent Akshita Nanda (below). **OPINION A24**



## 6 Firms still look at grades

Firms are still drawn to good grades as these are still a strong sign of a prospective employee's capability, leading employers said at a forum organised by the Nanyang Technological University Students' Union yesterday. **HOME B2**

## 7 Facebook ops centre here

Facebook will launch a new operations centre here to monitor and manage content related to political elections in the region, a move observers see as a step in the right direction to fight fake news. It will be one of two such new regional centres in the world, the other being in Dublin, Ireland. **HOME B8**

## 8 Rosy outlook for local firms

Two reports released on Tuesday paint a rosy business picture for both small and large Singapore-based firms despite challenging global economic factors. Small firms are keen to expand overseas and large companies raked in record profits last year. **BUSINESS C2**

## 9 Sports Hub's hot seat

While the Sports Hub embarks on a global search for a new chief executive – its fourth in four years – insiders have weighed in on the criteria needed for success. They say the next boss should ideally be local and be able to balance social and commercial interests, which are often conflicting. **SPORT C10**

## 10 Nickelback's first time here

Canadian rock band Nickelback have often been accused of writing songs that are easy to play – and bassist Mike Kroeger agrees. "They are not that hard to play, but what is hard is writing them." The band are playing their first gig in Singapore on Feb 20. **LIFE D6**

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### VIDEO

#### Paw patrol

Meet the dogs of Certis K-9, the first auxiliary police K-9 unit in Singapore. The unit will work alongside auxiliary officers to safeguard key installations such as airports and transport hubs. <http://str.sg/pawpatrol>

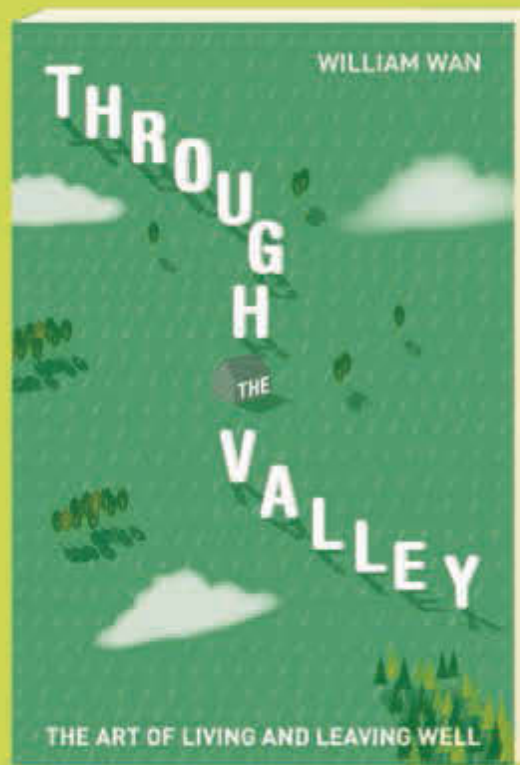


### VIDEO

#### Gangster turned mentor

Once a hardcore gangster, Mr Kenneth Tan now runs two firms and mentors troubled youth. He tells us about his past, and how his passion for art and design led him on the right path. <http://str.sg/mentor>

# Celebrate the Art of Living and Leaving Well



The author, Dr William Wan, General Secretary of Singapore Kindness Movement, will share his unique insights on how people can age gracefully at his book launch.

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# Judge to chair COI looking into actor's death

Defence Minister will also deliver statement in Parliament on recent NS training deaths

Lim Min Zhang

A Committee of Inquiry (COI), chaired for the first time by a State Court-nominated judge, was convened last Friday to look into the circumstances leading to the death of Singapore actor Aloysius Pang while he was on reservist duty, the Defence Ministry (Mindef) said yesterday.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen will also deliver a ministerial statement addressing recent national service training deaths when Parliament next sits on Feb 11.

Since June last year, Mindef has included serving or former judges as people eligible to chair the COI, in addition to senior civil servants.

While the statement did not name the members, the ministry said the other members of the independent COI are a consultant medical specialist, a member of the External Review Panel on Singapore Armed Forces Safety (ERPSS), a member of the Workplace Safety and Health Council, and a senior-ranked national serviceman.

None of the members works within Mindef or is a Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) regular, it added.

Corporal First Class (NS) Pang was doing repair work inside a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer (SSPH) during an annual live-firing exercise in New Zealand on Jan 19 when he sustained a serious injury that led to his death four days later.

The operationally ready national serviceman (NSman) was an armament technician from the 268th Battalion, Singapore Artillery. His death is the fifth reported since September 2017, following four preceding years of zero training- and operations-related fatalities.

The COI, whose findings will be made public, has full powers and access to material and witnesses to investigate the circumstances leading to the death. It will also determine the contributory factors and

make recommendations to rectify any lapses uncovered. The COI, convened by the Armed Forces Council last Friday, will submit its full report to the ERPSS for comments.

The ministry yesterday also provided details of the safety record for the SSPH and the standard operating procedures required of its operating and maintenance crew.

It said that in the last 15 years of SSPH operations, there has not been any reported injury of servicemen due to the gun being lowered for maintenance, or when operating in or firing the SSPH.

In the same period, more than 1,000 full-time servicemen, NSmen and regulars have been trained to operate the SSPH, with around 12,500 rounds fired.

The Chief of Army, Major-General Goh Si Hou, said at a press conference last Thursday that Mr Pang was in the SSPH cabin with two other servicemen – another technician and a gun detachment commander – when the incident happened.

Initial findings showed that he suffered crush injuries when he was unable to get out of the gun barrel's way as it was lowered. When maintenance work is required during training and operations, a team of technicians is activated and they take charge of the SSPH.

According to the ministry, the technicians may require the assistance of the gun commander. The army technicians are also trained and required to abide by the same drills and safety protocols as the four-man crew operating the SSPH.

Mindef said the SAF has reduced the training tempo for commanders and soldiers to assess safety protocols and plans in their units. "The reduced training tempo will remain in place until the SAF is satisfied that training and other activities can be conducted safely. The SAF is committed to strengthening the safety culture on the ground," it added.

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## Operating the self-propelled howitzer

The locally developed Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer (SSPH) is operated by a crew of four. They are trained to operate under a set of safety protocols, including when the gun barrel is lowered. When maintenance work needs to be done, army technicians are activated and they take charge of the SSPH. Technicians are required to abide by the same drills and safety protocols as the crew.

### Driver

Responsible for driving the SSPH



### Gun commander

Commands and supervises the gun detachment, and is responsible for all equipment in the detachment



### Charge loader

Responsible for preparing and loading the correct charge for the firing of the ammunition



**Gun barrel**  
Takes about 9-10 seconds to lower to standby position.

### Barrel-lowering drill

- Gun commander conducts a visual check to ensure that the area surrounding the barrel is free of obstacles

- The commander also checks that the crew in the cabin remain in their respective safe operating positions and are not in the travel path of the barrel

- The commander will say "clear away" to warn the crew of barrel movement and say "standby" before lowering the barrel

### Safety precautions

The gun commander, charge loader or ammo loader can activate an emergency stop button – located within reach from their respective operating positions – in emergency situations that require the gun barrel or other mechanical moving parts in the turret to stop moving immediately

### Ammo loader

Responsible for loading the correct ammunition to be fired



Source: MINDEF STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



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# PAP group seeks hike in CPF contribution for those above 55

This is among proposals on supporting seniors as they work, retire and live

Seow Bei Yi

A group in the People's Action Party that champions causes of the elderly has called for a number of recommendations on supporting seniors as they work, retire and live.

Among other things, the PAP Seniors Group (PAP.SG) – led by chairman Tan Chuan-Jin – is proposing that the Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution rates for workers beyond the age of 55 be increased “so that all members continue to enjoy the same level of (contributions) regardless of how old they are”.

While the rates for those aged 55 and below is 37 per cent, this number drops for workers older than 55 – ranging from 12.5 per cent to 26 per cent of wages. Employers also contribute a smaller proportion.

“With longer life expectancy and a smaller base of family support, Singaporeans need to be even more self-reliant in securing a stream of lifelong income for retirement,”

PAP.SG said in a 21-page position paper released yesterday at the party's headquarters in Bedok.

In the paper, which was submitted to the Government, the group added that increasing CPF contribution rates for workers beyond 55 would help boost their retirement adequacy and ensure older workers are paid the same as their younger colleagues for doing the same job.

A motion will be tabled on matters raised in the paper at the next Parliament sitting on Feb 11, said Mr Tan, who is also Speaker of Parliament. The paper comes weeks before the Budget statement is delivered by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat on Feb 18.

Wholesaler Par International's managing director David Tan said unless there is government support to offset added costs for businesses – if CPF contribution rates for older workers are increased – firms might be less willing to retain seniors.

Singapore Business Federation chairman Teo Siong Seng suggested that any increase in CPF contribution rates for workers older than 55 should not be made mandatory.

Besides the recommendation on contribution rates, PAP.SG also called on employers and unions to



PAP.SG chairman and Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin (right) at yesterday's press conference with vice-chairman and MP Henry Kwek and Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, PAP.SG member and a former minister of state. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

offer and encourage workers to take on flexible work arrangements, which would allow older workers to remain employed, including in part-time work.

“While many of our older workers want to, and can continue to take on full-time jobs, some prefer to work at a lower intensity,” the group said. It added that policies are already there for older workers to have more opportunities, with grants to help industries redesign jobs for older workers, as well as train and acclimatise seniors to new industries.

“Where we can improve is to push for the adoption of these efforts in more industries,” PAP.SG said, adding that seniors are potential manpower in a tight labour mar-

ket. The paper also proposed that employers be given more help to manage the costs of hiring seniors.

Nee Soon GRC MP Henry Kwek said at a press conference yesterday that the rise of the sharing economy can mean more freelancing opportunities for seniors as well, but the issue is access to these roles. He added that more can be done to strengthen seniors' digital literacy.

On housing, the group suggested revising developmental guidelines for private sector developers who want to set up senior group homes that have assisted-living facilities.

There could be a separate land-use category for developers who want to build these homes, said Mr

Kwek, so they are not competing with other forms of residences and can keep costs affordable.

Former PAP MP Chiang Hai Ding, a member of PAP.SG, said group homes can also be built in new or existing Housing Board blocks. Such homes already exist in some areas.

The paper added: “Moving forward, our seniors want more diverse housing options. Many seniors prefer to maintain their independence and age in place.”

Other suggestions include providing an allowance for full-time caregivers like those caring for frail parents, and encouraging volunteerism and exercise among seniors.

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## RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

**With longer life expectancy and a smaller base of family support, Singaporeans need to be even more self-reliant in securing a stream of lifelong income for retirement.**



PAP.SG, in a 21-page position paper released yesterday at the party's headquarters in Bedok.

## Special focus on disadvantaged in Budget, says Indranee

Cara Wong

The upcoming Budget will cover social programmes that focus on the elderly, healthcare and education as well as pay special attention to helping the disadvantaged and underprivileged, Second Minister for Finance and Education Indranee Rajah said yesterday.

Speaking to the media during a visit to Big Heart Student Care centre in Lianhua Primary School, Ms Indranee, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, said there is a small group of people unable to make the most of the opportunities given to them because they face issues such as family difficulties.

“We are putting special focus on how we can help those who are underprivileged, from a disadvantaged background, and the Uplift committee will be a part of that,” she said, referring to the Uplifting Pupils in Life and Inspiring Families Taskforce.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, who will present this year's Budget statement on Feb 18, is also expected to focus on boosting security and defence.

Ms Indranee declined to elaborate on whether social spending this year would be higher than that last year, but she noted that it has more than doubled in the past decade, spurred in part by the growing needs in the education and healthcare sectors – the first because of the need for continued education, and the other due to an ageing population.

As the head of the eight-member Uplift, Ms Indranee also said the visit to the student care centre has helped her confirm some of the ideas the committee has had.



Second Minister for Finance and Education Indranee Rajah and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Manpower Low Yen Ling helping children from Big Heart Student Care centre in Lianhua Primary School put up notes of appreciation on a “tree” yesterday. The centre is one of 24 operated by the four self-help groups. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

The Big Heart Student Care centre at Lianhua Primary School is one of 24 centres operated by the four self-help groups – the Chinese Development Assistance Council, Mendaki, Singapore Indian Development Association and Eurasian Association. Six more centres are expected to be set up by the four self-help groups by next year.

Nearly half, or 45 per cent, of the 3,021 students enrolled in these school-based student care centres are from lower-income families and pay subsidised fees under the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Student Care Fee Assistance scheme.

Recounting her conversations with students, Ms Indranee said that

one told her that she preferred studying at the centre than at home as it was more conducive, while another shared that he was taken to school every day by neighbours instead of his parents.

“You can see that some of the ideas we have been looking at, like having a structured environment... or getting volunteers to assist those

who are not able to take the kids to school, it is actually being played out in real life here,” said Ms Indranee.

She added that the Uplift committee would be making more detailed recommendations when Parliament meets to debate the details of the Budget.

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## Affordable, quality healthcare a key concern: Reach survey

Rachel Au-Yong  
Political Correspondent

One main concern among Singaporeans is getting access to affordable, quality healthcare, a pre-Budget survey has found.

Government feedback arm Reach gathered opinions from more than 2,500 Singaporeans from Dec 3 last year to Jan 11 to find out how they thought the Government can better support them. It published the results yesterday.

Many people called for better co-ordination and sharing of resources and data between the Government, healthcare providers and the social service sector.

They also called for a reassessment of how subsidies are allocated so they can better serve those who need them most.

Also of importance to Singaporeans is a conducive environment to start families. To that end, respondents asked for greater support in terms of access to housing, quality early childhood education and an

improved work-life balance.

Other suggestions included providing more subsidised childcare services, school supplies and more outreach programmes to reach lower-income families.

Tapping a wider community network, like local grassroots organisations, would allow these children to receive more comprehensive support, they said.

Many Singaporeans acknowledged the need for the country to maintain a competitive edge, and suggested that companies

foster a spirit of innovation by developing research capabilities and encouraging employees to undergo training.

They also noted the ongoing fight against terrorism and the need to stay vigilant and resilient, and suggested that the Government work with companies to instil in their employees the concept of total defence.

As for building a more caring and inclusive society, some participants said volunteering should be made compulsory for all tertiary stu-

dents, while others suggested incentives for working adults to volunteer, such as tax rebates or days off from work.

Several respondents also asked for a higher representation of non-governmental and voluntary welfare organisations in Parliament so that the authorities can improve existing schemes.

Reach chairman Sam Tan said the feedback exercise gives Singaporeans from all walks of life the opportunity to let the Government know how it can better their lives.

“The Budget is about national priorities, and every Singaporean has a stake in it,” said Mr Tan, who is Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Social and Family Development.

Apart from the key feedback themes, respondents said they hoped to see more financial support for middle-income families, and the cost of living kept low. Some also wanted greater transparency on government spending.

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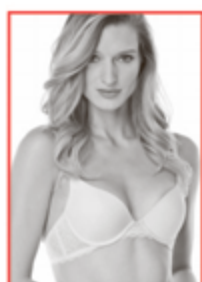
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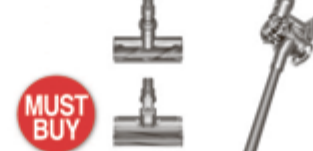


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# Turning Orchard from a shopping to lifestyle destination

In a bid to rejuvenate Singapore's most famous street and ensure it stays relevant, an ambitious plan has been unveiled to introduce new retail concepts, attractions, entertainment and events along the 2.4km stretch. This comes after a six-month study and consultations with stakeholders. An exhibition on future plans for Orchard Road will be held at Orchard Fountain Corner until Feb 13, for the public to visit and share feedback.



## 1 New Lifestyle Experience @ Tanglin

Tanglin will be branded a mixed-use neighbourhood with arts and artisanal choices, with the conserved Tudor Court for example used to house more arts and cultural offerings



## 2 New Vantage Point @ Orchard/Paterson Road Junction

Elevated link bridges may be built to make it easier for visitors to cross the junctions of Orchard and Paterson roads



Design Orchard, a retail and incubation space to showcase and groom local talent



## 3 New Mixed-use Developments @ Orchard Interchange

More mixed-use developments to be built on vacant parcels of state land along Orchard Boulevard which is above the upcoming Orchard Interchange MRT along the Thomson-East Coast Line

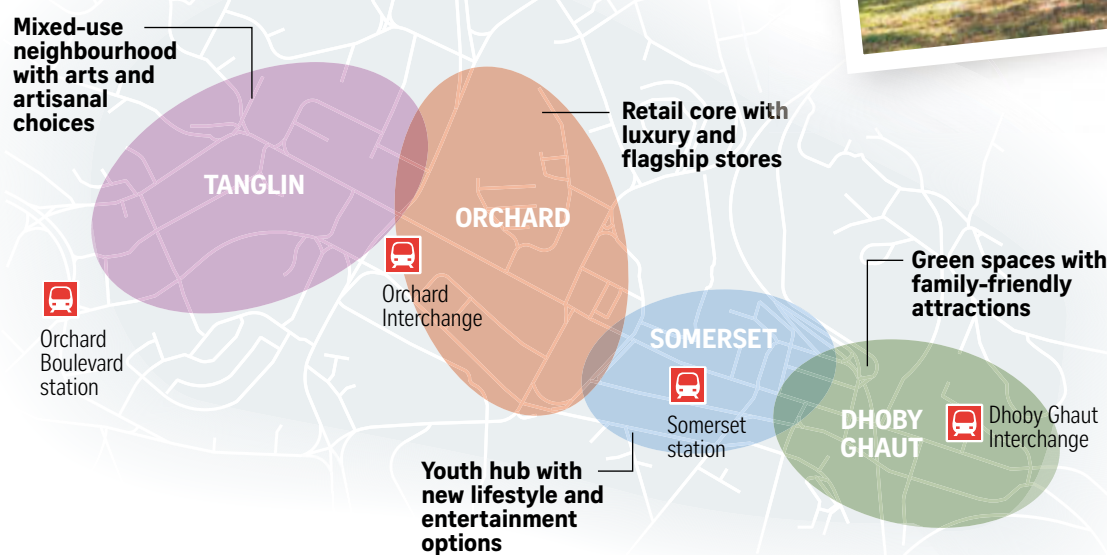
## 4 New Event Space @ Somerset

Grange Road open-air carpark may be transformed into a dedicated events space

## 5 New Lifestyle Uses @ Somerset

Somerset will strengthen its positioning as a youth hub with new lifestyle options

### ORCHARD ROAD'S FOUR SUB-PRECINCTS



Dhoby Ghaut Green may soon include water-play features and an events space

Source: NATIONAL PARKS BOARD, SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD, URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY PHOTOS: DESMOND FOO, SAHIBA CHAUDHARY, NATIONAL PARKS BOARD STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

# Buy-in from landlords and retailers crucial: Observers

These two groups need to work closely to capitalise on the good proposals, they say

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

The ideas proposed by government agencies to transform Orchard Road is a good start, but they will come to nought without the buy-in from landlords and retailers, said stakeholders and observers.

Speaking to the media at yesterday's announcement, Orchard

Road Business Association chairman Mark Shaw said the ideas are "pretty good", but "we would have preferred to see some bolder moves", like introducing more surface-level pedestrian crossings.

Some proposals involving interaction between owners of several building and malls may also be difficult to implement, he said. "Getting cooperation between the landlords

and mall owners, the stakeholders on the street, that is going to be the biggest challenge."

Cushman & Wakefield's senior director and head of research Christine Li said the plans help to address connectivity issues and has the potential to bring extra footfall, but are not a "game changer".

She added: "It still does not address the issue of our undifferentiated retail offerings in Orchard Road. Landlords and retailers need to work closely to capitalise on the enhanced infrastructural changes."

Ms Esther Ho, director of Nanyang Polytechnic's School of Business Management, said that having themes in the sub-precincts will help developers focus more on aligning their malls with the concept and help avoid the "cookie-cutter situation, where a shopper is confronted with the same brands or same merchandise assortment in different parts of Orchard Road".

Australian urban planning consultancy Cistri, which conducted a \$1.3 million study on Orchard Road last year and made recommendations

for the shopping belt's long-term development, said that the proposals by the authorities build on the precinct's strengths.

Mr Jack Backen, director of property economics and research at the firm, said that "compared to the other great streets of the world, Orchard Road is very long with a particularly large retail component".

Broadening its focus beyond shopping would provide more reasons to visit, he said.

Speaking at the launch of Design Orchard, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing said: "There has to be a balance between master planning Orchard Road and for (the road) to have sufficient space for ground-up initiatives so that it can grow organically and develop its own character".

Defining the success of Orchard Road's evolution relies on two factors: It needs to continue to be a place where Singaporeans from all walks of life build memories, as well as one where new lifestyle and retail concepts and experiences are created, he added.

Mr Ryota Yamazaki, senior manager at Deloitte Consulting Southeast Asia, said transforming Orchard Road involves attracting more visitors and increasing consumer spend at its shops and malls.

The proposals appear skewed towards attracting shoppers, while the key to increasing retail sales is to revamp the tenant mix and merchandising strategy across the different shopping malls, he said.

National University of Singapore's Institute of Real Estate Studies director Sing Tien Foo suggested that creating differentiated precincts could ease the overcrowding which occurs in the vicinity of Orchard MRT station.

Dr Stefanie Chua, 29, who was visiting the exhibition on the proposed plans, said she likes the idea of having more green spaces and outdoor activities.

"It would be nice to have more cafes and alfresco areas. Right now, it is too many shops, too much of the same thing," she added.

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# Elections Dept to move from iconic site



The Elections Department office, now at 11 Prinsep Link (above), has been the hub of administrative matters related to elections for nearly 25 years. The move to Novena Rise (left) will consolidate the department's two sites – the Prinsep office and a training centre in Victoria Street. PHOTOS: LIANHE ZAOBAO

It will move from Prinsep Street to former school in Novena Rise

Tan Tam Mei

The Elections Department (ELD) will be moving from its iconic Prinsep Street site, the scene of many an election drama, to Novena Rise.

The news comes just two years after the department celebrated its 70th anniversary. It will be taking over the former site of Balestier Hill Secondary School, which is off Thomson Road.

The department, which currently resides at the corner of Prinsep Street and Prinsep Link, is responsible for preparing and managing the conduct of national referendums in Singapore – including the general and presidential elections.

A spokesman said the ELD, which is under the Prime Minister's Office, will be calling a tender for renovation works soon.

Renovations are expected to be completed late this year or early next year, the spokesman added in response to queries from The Straits Times.

It is unclear whether the ELD will be relocating before the next general election, which must be held by April 2021.

The move will consolidate the department's two sites – the office in Prinsep Link and a training centre in Victoria Street – said the spokesman.

"The former Balestier Hill Secondary School site meets ELD's operational and training needs with minimal renovation work," she added.

The department took over the site last year after the school moved out following its merger with Beatty Secondary School in January 2017.

Since mid-last year, the ELD has put up tenders on the government e-procurement portal GeBiz for various services and construction works at the Novena Rise site.

These range from project management services to underground detection works, as well as security services.

The present ELD office, housed in a three-storey building, has been the hub of administrative matters related to elections for nearly 25 years, with the most recent being the 2017 presidential election.

ST understands there are plans to return the Prinsep Link plot to the state for other use.

The site has also been the scene where the Returning Officer, whose duties include overseeing the conduct of polls and directing election officials, has announced the results of each election since 1994.

The department was previously located in Shenton Way at what is now AXA Tower. Before that, it was situated at the site of the current National Gallery of Singapore in St Andrew's Road.

Since it was set up in 1947, the ELD has conducted 69 elections.

Its work involves the training of election officers, maintaining and updating the registers of electors as well as planning for election manpower, premises and logistical requirements.

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# Suspicious about leak emerged as early as in 2012

American complained to MOH his boyfriend had shared screenshots of HIV Registry

**Kor Kian Beng**  
Defence & Security Editor

Suspicious that contents of the HIV Registry had been leaked emerged as early as in 2012, when American fraudster Mikhy Farrera Brochez blew the whistle on his Singaporean doctor-boyfriend Ler Teck Siang to the Ministry of Health (MOH).

Brochez complained to an MOH director that Ler had shared screenshots of the HIV Registry – which the director had access to as the head of the National Public Health Unit – and told another individual that he was HIV-positive.

The complaint led to MOH launching a probe into Ler while the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) investigated whether Brochez was really HIV-free, as stated in his Employment Pass (EP) application.

These details emerged in evidence and testimonies in court papers involving the two when they were dealt with on charges of cheating and lying to public servants, among other charges.

Ler and Brochez are now at the centre of another high-profile data breach in the healthcare sector that came to light on Monday.

MOH revealed that more than 14,200 people with the human immunodeficiency virus had their confidential information, including contact details and medical information, leaked online by Brochez.

Ler, 36, has been charged with failing to retain possession of a thumbdrive containing information from the HIV Registry.

He was convicted last September of two charges each of abetment of cheating and of giving a false statement to a public servant.

Ler was sentenced last November to two years in jail and is appealing against his conviction and sentence. The prosecution dropped its appeal against his sentence.

Brochez, 34, was sentenced in March 2017 to 28 months in jail, and was deported in April last year after completing his sentence.

Ler told the police that he and Brochez had problems in their relationship in early 2009.



Ler Teck Siang, shown here at a lo hei gathering with colleagues in a photo dated January 2016, has been charged with failing to retain possession of a thumbdrive containing information from the HIV Registry. He was convicted last September on two charges each of abetment of cheating and of giving a false statement to a public servant, and is appealing against his conviction and two-year jail sentence. PHOTO: FAITH MEDICAL GROUP



Mikhy Farrera Brochez was reported to have been arrested in the US state of Kentucky last month for criminal trespass. PHOTO: CLARK COUNTY SHERIFF OFFICE

The two became acquainted through a gay dating website and met in person for the first time in Hong Kong in 2007. By January the next year, Brochez had moved to Singapore and was living with Ler in his Craig Road apartment.

Ler said that Brochez had accused him of sharing a screenshot of the HIV Registry with another individual and telling him that

Brochez was HIV-positive.

He added that some time towards the end of 2012, he was asked by Dr Jeffrey Cutter – then director of the Communicable Diseases Division at MOH – about Brochez's allegations against him. Specifically, Dr Cutter had asked Ler if he had taken screenshots of the HIV Registry.

"Following this, the accused (Ler) was informed of an official investi-

gation by MOH in respect of the allegations made by Mikhy against him," said court papers.

In September 2013, Ler was contacted by an officer from MOH's Surveillance and Enforcement Branch (SEB).

Around Oct 4 that year, MOM received information from MOH that Brochez was HIV-positive and might have made a false declaration in his application in 2011 for a Personalised Employment Pass (PEP).

MOM informed Brochez about the tip-off it had received and instructed him on Oct 8 to cancel his PEP by Nov 8, failing which the ministry would cancel it.

But Brochez replied that he would supply "proof of being free of HIV" to MOM.

On Nov 22, 2013, he went to a clinic where Ler was working as a doctor. Ler passed off his own blood as Brochez's, which enabled the American to retain his PEP.

It was the same rule the two had used when Brochez first applied for an EP in 2008.

But the MOH investigator was surprised to find out that it was Ler who had conducted the test on Brochez when he visited the clinic

as part of his investigations.

On Dec 10, 2013, Ler was questioned by the same SEB officer at Kranji Camp, where the doctor was on in-camp training duty.

Ler then lied that the blood was not taken from "Mikhy", who had accused him of leaking his HIV-positive status, but from another person. He was later convicted of lying to a public servant.

The SEB officer informed his superiors. A day later, a police report was lodged over a possible cheating offence over the blood test.

On Jan 23, 2014, Ler was questioned by the police and he lied again that it was Brochez's blood – and not his own – that was tested on Nov 22.

MOH said Ler resigned in January 2014.

On May 2, 2014, Brochez also lied to the police that it was his blood that was tested during the HIV test.

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• Additional reporting by Fabian Koh and Rei Kurohi

SEE OPINION A26

Marine Terrace branch between August 2015 and December 2016.

In early 2017, Ler's name was removed from the website and, yesterday, the clinic staff would only confirm that he had left "a long time ago".

Brochez moved into Ler's private flat at 20 Craig Road when he arrived in Singapore in January 2008.

A check yesterday morning at their last known address in Lorong N, Telok Kurau, showed that Ler was no longer living there, with neighbours saying he "moved out quite a while back".

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## News analysis

# Answers to many questions needed to assuage public concerns



**Kor Kian Beng**  
Defence & Security Editor

Two days after the Ministry of Health's (MOH) bombshell disclosure that data of HIV-positive individuals in Singapore had been leaked online, many questions remain over how this happened, whether the matter has been handled appropriately and if enough has been done to stem the further spread of information that had been obtained illegally.

Key among these questions is why the ministry chose to reveal only on Monday that sensitive data from the HIV Registry involving 14,200 individuals diagnosed with the virus had been compromised, when it appears to have been made aware of breaches on two earlier occasions.

The first was in May 2016, when the ministry received information that American fraudster Mikhy Farrera Brochez, 34, was in possession of confidential information that appeared to be from the registry.

MOH lodged a police report, which led to the properties of Brochez and his Singapore doctor-boyfriend Ler Teck Siang, 36, being searched.

The ministry said on Monday that "all relevant material found were seized and secured by the police".

The second occasion the ministry was made aware was in May last year, when it again received information that Brochez still had part of the records that he possessed in 2016.

MOH said the information did not appear to have been disclosed in any public manner. So what it did was to lodge a police report – though it also contacted affected individuals to notify them.

Asked about the decision to announce the leak only on Monday, the ministry's Permanent Secretary Chan Heng Kee told a press conference that the factors involved in not doing so earlier included the interests and well-being of HIV-positive individuals.

Another consideration was whether the information was secure at that point and not at risk of being made public later.

"Certainly, in a case where the info is contained, we would take a more conservative approach given that we do know that the persons in this registry would have concern about a public announcement," Mr Chan said.

He added that more than half of those affected were foreigners, which also made it difficult for MOH to contact them.

That decision has itself raised more questions.

First, having been made aware last year that Brochez still had data in his possession despite the 2016 raid, what made the ministry confident that he would still not make it public at a later stage.

As it turned out, he did so on Jan 22 this year – thus prompting MOH to go public about the leak.

Second, in not revealing the breach of HIV Registry data earlier – whether in 2016 or 2018 – the ministry may have lost the opportunity to limit the damage. It also risked opening itself up to accusations of a cover-up.

Something that is now talked about among observers and commentators, especially online.

Third, there appears to be individuals affected by the leak of records that Brochez still had in his possession last year. The ministry said the number of such affected individuals last year was very small. Even so, it marked an escalation of the situation in 2016, when there was no mention that Brochez leaked the records.

MOH declined to reveal how Brochez released the data of HIV-affected individuals online, except to say that it had disabled access to the link, and that it is working with the relevant parties to scan the Internet for signs of further disclosure.

This may be scant comfort to the affected individuals.

Given that Brochez was deported in April last year, it is likely he had stored the information on overseas sites and servers, thus making it harder to track and disable access.

The events in 2016 and 2018 – when the ministry was made aware of breaches – also raises questions about the robustness of police investigations and enforcement efforts.

The conclusion that "all relevant material found were seized and secured by the police" after a search of Brochez and Ler's properties in May 2016 has now been upended, given that MOH learnt last year that Brochez still had data with him.

Are there ongoing investigations into whether there were lapses in the 2016 search? There are also no details about the investigation efforts between 2014 and May 2016 when the couple were arrested.

This may stem from a cessation of police investigations after Brochez and Ler both lied – in separate police interviews in 2014 – about the falsification of the blood samples. Was enough done to check the veracity of their accounts that could have prevented a delay in investigations?

Ler is facing charges under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) for "failing to take reasonable care of a thumbdrive on which he saved the said information" from the HIV Registry.

Given that disseminating and receiving potentially confidential information are offences under the OSA, it is puzzling why Brochez was not charged too and allowed to be deported last April.

When asked, the Attorney-General's Chambers said police are investigating Brochez for various offences committed after his deportation and "hence we are unable to comment further".

Details from court papers in Ler's trial for offences under the Penal Code showed that suspicions of the HIV Registry data being leaked by him emerged as early as in 2012.

Why then did the ministry only implement additional safeguards in 2016 against the mishandling of information by authorised personnel? These safeguards included a two-person approval process to download and decrypt registry information to ensure that information cannot be accessed by a single person.

According to court papers for Ler's charge under the OSA, he continued to have access to the HIV Registry from March 2012 to May 2016, even though he stepped down as head of National Public Health Unit in May 2013.

In the light of recent high-profile data breaches such as the SingHealth cyber attack that compromised the records of 1.5 million patients, it is imperative for the authorities to provide more answers than questions to boost public confidence. It is also at least assuage public concerns.

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## Love, lies, leak

• **2007:** Ler Teck Siang and Mikhy Farrera Brochez connect through a gay dating website and meet in Hong Kong. By January 2008, he moves in with Ler here.

• **March 11, 2008:** Brochez tests positive for HIV under a fake passport at a Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association (Sata) clinic.

• **March 13, 2008:** Ler uses own blood instead of Brochez's to help him pass a blood test and get an employment pass.

• **February 2011:** Brochez applies for and gets a Personalised Employment Pass (PEP).

• **March 2012 – May 2013:** Ler heads the Ministry of Health's (MOH) National Public Health Unit and gets access to the HIV Registry.

• **End-2012:** Ler says he was asked by Dr Jeffrey Cutter – then director of the Communicable Diseases Division at MOH – whether he has taken any screenshots of the HIV Registry, as alleged by Brochez.

• **August / September 2013:** MOH launches inquiry into Brochez's allegation that Ler revealed his HIV status to others. It informs the Ministry of Manpower, which threatens to cancel Brochez's PEP.

• **Nov 22, 2013:** Ler and Brochez fake another blood test. MOH investigator visits clinic and is surprised to learn that Ler, whom he is investigating, conducted the test on Brochez.

• **Dec 10, 2013:** Ler lies to MOH officer that the person who accused him is not the person whose blood sample he took.

• **Dec 11, 2013:** Police report lodged over a possible cheating offence over the Nov 22, 2013, blood test.

• **Jan 23, 2014:** Ler is questioned by the police and lies it was Brochez's blood – not his own – that was tested.

• **May 2, 2014:** Brochez also tells police that it was his blood that was tested.

• **May 2016:** MOH lodges police report after learning that Brochez possesses information which appears to be from the HIV Registry.

• **May 23-24, 2016:** Both Ler and Brochez are questioned by the police and arrested. Many items are seized from their flat.

• **June 2016:** Ler is charged with offences under the Penal Code and Official Secrets Act (OSA). Brochez is remanded in prison.

• **March 2017:** Brochez is convicted of numerous fraud and drug-related offences, and sentenced to 28 months in jail.

• **April 2018:** Brochez is released from prison and deported.

• **May 2018:** MOH learns that Brochez still has part of the HIV Registry records he had possessed in 2016. This includes details of people with HIV. At the time, the records did not appear to have been disclosed publicly. MOH makes a police report and contacts the affected individuals to notify them.

• **September 2018:** Ler is convicted of abetting Brochez to commit cheating and of providing false information to the police and MOH. He is sentenced to 24 months in jail.

• **Jan 22, 2019:** MOH is notified by the police that confidential information from MOH's HIV Registry, that could be in Brochez's possession, has been leaked online.

• **Jan 23, 2019:** MOH makes a police report.

• **Jan 24, 2019:** MOH ascertains that the disclosed information matches the HIV Registry's records up to January 2013.

• **Jan 24-25, 2019:** MOH works with relevant parties to disable access to the information.

• **March 2019:** Ler's appeal against his 24-month sentence to be heard. His charge under the OSA is pending.

## American arrested for criminal trespass in Kentucky

**Fabian Koh and Rei Kurohi**

Mikhy Farrera Brochez, the American at the centre of the leak of information in Singapore's HIV Registry, has run afoul of the law in his own country.

The 34-year-old, who was deported from Singapore after serving a jail term for several fraud and drug-related offences, was ar-

rested in Clark County, Kentucky, for criminal trespass last month.

He was named by the Ministry of Health (MOH) on Monday as the culprit who leaked online the personal information of 14,200 individuals with HIV.

Brochez got the information because his boyfriend, Singaporean doctor Ler Teck Siang, 36, was the head of MOH's National Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013, and could access

the HIV Registry information for work purposes.

Brochez lived in Singapore on an Employment Pass between January 2008 and June 2016, before he was jailed for 28 months for offences that included lying to the Ministry of Manpower about his HIV status and using forged degrees in job applications.

After being deported in April last year, he returned home.

On Dec 8 last year, he was ar-

rested by the Clark County Sheriff Office in the morning, according to police arrests monitoring site mugshots.com.

It said that Brochez, who is 1.83m tall and weighs 91kg, was arrested for third-degree criminal trespass, believed to have been committed at his mother's house.

According to the Kentucky Statutes, the offence under Chapter 511 occurs when the offender "knowingly enters or remains un-

lawfully in or upon premises".

MOH said Brochez still possesses the confidential information.

Meanwhile, his partner Ler is appealing against his two-year jail sentence for abetting Brochez to commit cheating and giving false information to the police and MOH.

The hearing is scheduled to take place in March.

Ler resigned from MOH in January 2014 and subsequently became a general practitioner at Faith Medical Group.

A photo dated January 2016 shows him having lo hei with the group's doctors.

The group's website had stated that Ler was the anchor doctor at the

Marine Terrace branch between August 2015 and December 2016.

In early 2017, Ler's name was removed from the website and, yesterday, the clinic staff would only confirm that he had left "a long time ago".

Brochez moved into Ler's private flat at 20 Craig Road when he arrived in Singapore in January 2008.

A check yesterday morning at their last known address in Lorong N, Telok Kurau, showed that Ler was no longer living there, with neighbours saying he "moved out quite a while back".

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# MOM: HIV-positive staff protected from wrongful dismissal

**Joyce Lim**  
Senior Correspondent

Laws are in place to protect HIV-positive local employees from wrongful dismissal, said the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

It added that it has not received any past complaints or appeals against wrongful dismissal on the grounds of an employee's HIV status. Responding to queries from The

Straits Times, MOM said yesterday: "The Employment Act empowers the Minister for Manpower to direct an employer to reinstate an employee who has been wrongfully dismissed in his former job and to pay the employee for the loss of income, or direct the employer to compensate the employee."

"In the case of a unionised employee, the union may appeal to the Minister for Manpower under the Industrial Relations Act."

It also called on all employers "to treat employees fairly and based on merit, and not discriminate against any employee just because of his or her HIV status".

A dismissal can be deemed wrongful if there has been discrimination on any of various grounds, including a medical condition.

But a human resource director in the hospitality industry said she would sack her service staff if they were among the 14,200 people diag-

nosed with HIV and named in the leaked data.

"If it is a service staff who handles food, he will endanger the health of others he comes into contact with, especially when he has an open wound," she said.

Action for Aids (Afa) president Roy Chan, who is also a medical doctor, said such "uncalled for and unjustified" reactions stop people with HIV from revealing their condition.

The data breach – in which confi-

dential details such as names, addresses and HIV status were leaked online – has resulted in such anxiety within the community.

"HIV is infectious through sexual activity and not through contact in the social environment. In fact, patients on treatment are not infectious to others when they have sex," said Professor Chan.

"You don't get fired for having tuberculosis or malaria. Why HIV? Now, it can be treated. We are keep-

ing them alive, and they need to earn a living so they can pay for their treatment."

Afa said eight cases of wrongful dismissal in the past.

Some employers said they would transfer staff with HIV to positions they deem less risky.

A HR manager in the healthcare sector said all company staff have to go through HIV tests. Those who test positive are kept away from contact with patients.

"HIV is not the end of employment. We will redeploy them to other positions," said the manager.

Currently, MOM reviews the medical examination reports of all foreign workers as part of the work pass application process.

Those found to have specific infectious diseases, including HIV, are not issued work passes and must leave Singapore.

The Health Ministry said in 2005 that measures like HIV screening of foreigners seeking immigration passes and deporting those infected were put in place to safeguard the public health of locals.

Prof Chan urged the authorities to review the laws which he felt are

"out of date and out of line with what we try to say". For example, he would like to see foreigners with HIV be allowed to work here.

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# WORLD

## US report flags threat of China's growing influence

Control of South China Sea, race for military, technological superiority among issues raised

### Key points of the report

### CHINA

It is likely to continue to increase its maritime presence in the South China Sea, according to the annual assessment of threats against the United States from the US intelligence community. It is also expected to build military and dual-use infrastructure in the Spratly Islands to improve its ability to project power. China and Russia pose the biggest espionage and cyber attack threats to the US and are more aligned than they have been in decades.

### RUSSIA

Moscow meddled on President Donald Trump's behalf in the 2016 presidential election and can be expected to do the same in 2020.

### N. KOREA

Mr Kim Jong Un's government is unlikely to give up all of its nuclear weapons and has continued activity inconsistent with pledges to denuclearise.

### IRAN

The country is still abiding by the terms of the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal despite Mr Trump's decision to withdraw last year, claiming Tehran had broken it.

### ISIS

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria remains a potent threat in the Middle East as its leaders continue to encourage attacks on the West. The group still commands thousands of fighters and still has thousands of supporters around the world.

Charissa Yong  
US Correspondent  
In Washington

China is likely to continue increasing its maritime presence in the South China Seas as well as build military and dual-use infrastructure on the Spratly Islands to better control access and project power in the area, according to a newly released American intelligence assessment of global threats. Beijing seeks to influence the politics and economies of countries in its backyard, and is expected to increase its engagement in South-east Asia to build its influence while diminishing the influence of the United States and its allies, said the annual report submitted to the US Senate on Tuesday. When asked about the assessment, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang yesterday questioned why the US felt insecure as the world's top superpower with unparalleled military might. "If even the United States feels threatened in all directions, how would other countries feel? Would they think that danger is just at the door? How will they get by? I don't know where the strong insecurity of the US comes from," he said at a regular briefing. Mr Geng criticised what he called



Chinese soldiers on Spratly Islands in a 2016 file photo. The US intelligence report said that China is likely to continue building military and dual-use infrastructure in the area to better control access and project power. PHOTO: REUTERS

America's zero-sum way of thinking about security. He said: "The security of a country cannot be based on the insecurity of other countries. China has always advocated the establishment of a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable new security concept. "We hope that the US can abandon the zero-sum thinking, abandon the view of big powers from a confrontational perspective, conform to the tide of peace and development, join China, Russia and the international community, to jointly safeguard international peace and security." The 42-page US report said that, in the coming year, China and Russia would compete more intensively with the US, its allies and partners in an expansive race for tech-

nological and military superiority, thus presenting greater threats to US national security. "China's military capabilities and reach will continue to grow as it invests heavily in developing and fielding advanced weapons, and Beijing will use its military clout to extend its footprint and complement its broadening political and economic influence, as we have seen with its One Belt, One Road," said US intelligence chief Dan Coats as he presented the report to the Senate in an open hearing. "As part of this trend, we anticipate China will attempt to further solidify and increase its control within its immediate sphere of influence in the South China Sea, and its global presence further abroad," he added. The intelligence report said that

China sought to achieve effective control over its claimed waters with a whole-of-government strategy, compel South-east Asian claimants to acquiesce to its claims – at least tacitly – and bolster Beijing's narrative in the region that the US is in decline and China's pre-eminence is inevitable. In the wake of Washington's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, China has promoted a unified stance with Asean in defence of multilateralism and World Trade Organisation reform, said the report. Beijing also fosters a shared perception with Asean that US freedom of navigation operations through Chinese-claimed waters in the South China Sea were threats to regional stability, it added.

The report described China as currying favour with many Pacific island nations through bribery, infrastructure investments and diplomatic engagement with local leaders, while also shielding Myanmar from international sanctions in response to the humanitarian crisis and alleged ethnic cleansing in its Rakhine state. "Meanwhile, Beijing almost certainly will continue using pressure and incentives to try to force Taipei to accept the One China framework and ultimately Chinese control, and it will monitor the US reaction as an indicator of US resolve in the region," said the report. The report also detailed Chinese direct threats to the US, describing Beijing as the most active strategic competitor responsible for cyber es-

pionage against the US government, corporations and allies. China is able to launch cyber attacks that can temporarily disrupt critical infrastructure in the US, such as the disruption of a natural gas pipeline for days to weeks, it warned. The report listed concerns about the potential for Chinese intelligence and security services to use the country's information technology firms to spy on the US and its allies, a key fear in the broader American crackdown on Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, which was indicted on 13 counts of trade secret theft and bank fraud among other crimes in charges unsealed on Monday.

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## Moscow offered N-plant to Pyongyang

WASHINGTON • Russian officials made a secret proposal to North Korea last year aimed at resolving deadlocked negotiations with the Trump administration over the North's nuclear weapons programme, said US officials familiar with the discussions. In exchange for North Korea dismantling its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, Moscow offered the country a nuclear power plant. The Russian offer, which intelligence officials became aware of late last year, marks a new attempt by Moscow to intervene in the high-stakes nuclear talks as it reassesses itself into a string of geopolitical flash points from the Middle East to South Asia to Latin America. It's unclear how US President Donald Trump will view Moscow's proposal. For months, he has embraced an unorthodox approach to the negotiations, but his aides are likely to strenuously oppose any major Russian role in a final agreement. Diplomats and analysts familiar with Russia's actions said Moscow has a long-time interest in creating an energy link between Siberia and East Asia, as well as being viewed as a problem-solver for geopolitical crises. WASHINGTON POST

would use the power plant to build nuclear weapons while providing the impoverished country a new energy source. "The Russians are very opportunistic when it comes to North Korea, and this is not the first time they've pursued an energy stake in Korea," said Dr Victor Cha, a former White House staff member. "Previous administrations have not welcomed these Russian overtures, but with Trump, you never know because he doesn't adhere to traditional thinking," he said. After months of delays and cancelled meetings, talks between the US and North Korea have gained new momentum with the announcement of a second summit between Mr Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un planned for late next month. It is unclear whether the Russian offer is still under negotiation or if it has impacted the discussions between Washington and Pyongyang. If the Kim regime is interested, Russian officials have asked that Pyongyang provide a realistic timeline for when it could denuclearise, said people familiar with the discussions. The CIA has assessed that the Russian power plant would produce a very limited amount of weapons by-product, said one official. Diplomats and analysts familiar with Russia's actions said Moscow has a long-time interest in creating an energy link between Siberia and East Asia, as well as being viewed as a problem-solver for geopolitical crises. WASHINGTON POST

### News analysis

## N. Korea may cut ICBMs for a deal but keep N-arms

Nirmal Ghosh  
US Bureau Chief  
In Washington

With a second summit between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un imminent, a scenario that was once not open for discussion in Washington – that the international community will eventually have to accept North Korea as a nuclear power – seems more realistic than a denuclearised North Korea. The US intelligence assessment of the threat from North Korea has not changed in years. This was clear from National Intelligence director Dan Coats' testimony at a Senate committee on Tuesday that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to have weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability. Recent commercial satellite imagery also shows that North Korea appears to be still working on its missile programme. But the security and intelligence agencies' assessment is now at odds with the White House's reading. The US official objective remains the denuclearisation of North Korea, but soon after his June summit with Mr Kim in Singapore, Mr Trump said North Korea was not a threat to the US. Mr Trump lays great store in his personal rapport with Mr Kim, who in June last year made a vague commitment to work towards the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but has yet to take what Washington views as concrete steps in that direction. North Korea's decommissioning last year of an old missile engine test site and the Punggyeri nuclear test facility was good public relations but did not impress the US security and intelligence community. Some analysts are calling this a two-track administration, in which the President says one thing and the security establishment another. But the conversation has evolved, and the gap between the two is narrowing, with Mr Trump very likely to prevail. The most realistic achievement that may come out of a second summit may be to freeze or somewhat roll back North Korea's WMD capability, analysts say. With that as a beginning, from the US's perspective the next best-case scenario would be that North Korea agrees to eliminate its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), thus reducing the nuclear missile threat to the continental US. Mr Trump's sharp rhetoric on

North Korea only escalated, with the administration considering "bloody nose" strike options, after it became clear that Pyongyang had developed the ability to strike the US, a Washington-based diplomat noted. And Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Fox News that the administration's primary goal was to address the threat to the US. This could indicate a focus on eliminating ICBMs, says Dr Sue Mi Terry, senior fellow for Korea at CSIS. In return for an agreement on ICBMs, the US could further reduce military exercises and ease some sanctions to allow Seoul to proceed with its plans for economic projects with the North. This could happen even if North Korea – as is likely – does not produce a timetable for denuclearisation. At most, analysts say, the North will refrain from tests, freeze nuclear stockpiles and close down its SMW nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, which is, anyway, now of limited utility. Under this scenario, North Korea will remain a tacitly, and eventually formally, recognised nuclear armed state, which has long been a dream for its leaders. But the future of the US-South Korea alliance will be in doubt, and Japan will still be left vulnerable to shorter-range nuclear missiles. For Japan and South Korea, the temptation to develop their own nuclear weapons to achieve parity will only increase. The second big question after either an agreement on ICBMs, or a peace agreement formally ending the Korean War – or both – is whether Mr Trump will be tempted to reduce the number of US troops in South Korea. Seoul spent US\$864 million (S\$1.17 billion) last year on hosting 28,500 US troops, but Mr Trump has demanded that it double that to US\$1.6 billion a year. Burden-sharing negotiations are not getting anywhere. Mr Trump has for years said he wants to bring American troops back from remote and expensive overseas deployments. Analysts are cautioning against hasty action, however. In an article this week, Dr Bruce Klingner, senior research fellow for North-east Asia at The Heritage Foundation, wrote: "The Trump administration should avoid a situation of 'penny wise, pound foolish'. Rather than demanding a large increase in South Korean contributions, Washington should advocate a reasonable incremental augmentation. "Alliances are not transactional relationships but are based on shared values and goals. "The US-South Korean alliance was forged in blood. Its enduring motto is *katchi kaphida* ('we go together'), not 'we go together, if we are paid enough.'"

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US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross (right), Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer (second from right) and top US officials sitting down with (from left) Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He, central bank governor Yi Gang and other Chinese vice-ministers and senior officials for negotiations in the Diplomatic Room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

# US, China begin talks amid deep differences over reforms

## Few signs China will address US demands on structural reforms at highest-level talks since Dec

WASHINGTON • The United States and China launched a critical round of trade talks yesterday amid deep differences over Washington's demands for structural economic reforms from Beijing that will make it difficult to reach a deal before a March 2 US deadline to increase tariffs on Chinese goods.

Cabinet-level officials, led by Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, gathered in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, next to the White House.

During a photo opportunity at the start of the scheduled two days of talks, Mr Lighthizer, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and other top Trump administration officials sat silently across a long table from their Chinese counterparts, ignoring a reporter's questions.

After a few minutes, Mr Lighthizer broke the silence with joking small talk about table positioning and appearing in photographs from the meeting between

US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Argentina last year.

The talks began two days after the US charged Chinese telecommunications company Huawei Technologies and its chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, with conspiring to violate US sanctions on Iran by doing business through a subsidiary it tried to hide.

The talks are expected to be tense, with little indication so far that Chinese officials are willing to address core US demands to fully protect American intellectual property rights and end policies that Washington has said force US companies to transfer technology to Chinese firms.

The US complaints, along with accusations of Chinese cyber theft of US trade secrets and a systematic campaign to acquire US technology firms, were used by the Trump administration to justify punitive US tariffs on US\$250 billion (\$\$338 billion) worth of Chinese imports.

Mr Trump has threatened to raise tariffs on US\$200 billion of goods to 25 per cent from 10 per cent on March 2 if an agreement cannot be reached.

He has also threatened new tar-

iffs on the remainder of Chinese goods shipped to the US.

"Clearly on the structural concerns, on forced technology transfer, there remains a significant gap if not a wide chasm between the two sides", a person familiar with the talks said.

Chinese officials deny that their policies coerce technology transfers.

They have emphasised steps already taken, including reduced automotive tariffs and a draft foreign investment law that improves access for foreign firms and promises to outlaw "administrative means to force the transfer of technology".

China is fast-tracking that new law, with the country's largely rubber-stamp Parliament likely to approve it in March.

A crucial component of any progress in the talks, according to top administration officials, is agreement on a mechanism to verify and "enforce" China's follow-through on any reform pledges that it makes.

This could maintain the threat of US tariffs on Chinese goods long term.

Some business groups watching the talks were tempering expectations for a breakthrough this week.

With a month to go before the deadline, it was unlikely that the best offers from either side would be put on the table in the next two days, said Ms Erin Ennis, senior vice-president of the US-China Business Council.

But the Chinese side would likely have to bring to the table a new offer that goes significantly beyond its previous offers to significantly increase purchases of US goods, including soya beans, energy and manufactured goods.

People familiar with the talks said manufactured goods, a key priority for the Trump administration, were among the largest components of Chinese purchase pledges aimed at significantly reducing the US trade deficit with China.

But here, too, there are "no guarantees" that Beijing would follow through on these pledges, one of the people said.

Mr Mnuchin, one of the Trump administration's strongest advocates for a deal with China said on Fox Business Network on Tuesday that he expects "significant progress" on market access and technology transfer issues.

He insisted that the Huawei case and trade talks were "separate issues". REUTERS

## Beijing to pass new law banning forced tech transfers

BEIJING • China's Parliament will vote in March on a new foreign investment law that will ban forced technology transfers and illegal government "interference" in foreign business practices, the official Xinhua News agency reported yesterday.

The timetable suggests that the law will probably be formally approved then by the largely rubber-stamp legislature – accelerating a process that usually would take a year or more – as Beijing rushes to meet Washington's demands in a bid to de-escalate their trade war.

The full annual session of Parliament, which opens on March 5, tends to pass only select landmark legislation, with other laws being passed by its standing committee.

Parliament is unlikely to reject the law as its delegates are chosen for their loyalty to the ruling Communist Party and its agenda.

The Trump administration has accused Beijing of theft and forced IP transfers of intellectual property, demanding change and threatening further tariffs since trade tension flared between the two countries last year.

China has repeatedly rebutted such accusations.

The two sides yesterday began two days of talks in Washington – the highest-level discussions since United States President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed on a 90-day truce in their trade war in December.

The decision to accelerate the legislative process came after the National People's Congress Standing Committee convened a special two-day session this week to conduct a second review of the draft.

There is an "urgent need" for such a law to be passed as current legislation "could hardly catch up with the changing requirements in building a new system of open economy", said Justice Minister Fu Zhenghua, a Xinhua report said.

Once adopted, the law will replace three existing laws that regulate joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned enterprises.

Some law experts and business consultants have expressed scepticism about how far the legislation would protect the interests of foreign firms, given a general lack of rule of law in China.

As of October, there were almost 950,000 foreign-funded companies registered in China, accounting for investments exceeding US\$2.1 trillion (\$\$2.8 trillion), according to Xinhua. REUTERS

## US urges China, Russia to be open on nuclear reporting

BEIJING • The United States called for more transparency yesterday as it accused Russia and China of not fully reporting their nuclear programmes amid US threats to withdraw from a key arms control treaty.

A senior US official made the remarks as the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – all of them nuclear-armed powers – met in Beijing for talks on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ms Andrea Thompson, the US Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security, said there were "uneven results" in efforts to advance transparency under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

"We previously agreed to set (a) format for reporting, but the gap between the reports of the United States on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other, is great," Ms Thompson said in her opening remarks.

"I cannot overemphasise the value of transparency," she said. "We look forward to discussing how we can enhance transparency with a view to reassuring others of the very real steps we are taking to ensure full and verifiable compliance with our arms control non-proliferation and disarmament commitments and obligations."

Officials from Russia, China, France and Britain – countries under the Non-Proliferation of Nu-

clear Weapons (NPT) treaty – also attended the meeting, which will continue today.

The talks come after months of raging tensions between Moscow and Washington over the fate of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty signed in 1987 by then US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

US President Donald Trump has promised to walk away from the

agreement, while President Vladimir Putin has threatened a new arms race, saying Europe would be its main victim.

Earlier this month, talks in Geneva between senior diplomats from both countries fell through as Washington and Moscow blamed each other for pushing the INF treaty to the brink of collapse.

Last week, Russia unveiled its missile system in a bid to reassure foreign officials that its weapon was in compliance with the INF treaty.

But Washington has said the missile system should be destroyed in a

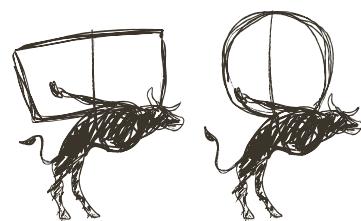
verifiable manner if Moscow wants to keep the INF alive.

At yesterday's conference in Beijing, deputy Russian foreign minister Sergey Ryabkov pointed at "the spread of unilateral attitudes" as a threat to nuclear non-proliferation.

"Many issues continue to be unsettled due to the lack of political will," he added, and said that there is an "evident lack of mutual trust" between the five NPT states.

"This (NPT) regime is being loosened, which is fraught with serious and negative impacts for nuclear non-proliferation," he said.

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## News analysis

# Churches remain symbolic targets of ISIS

## Manila says local militants against self-rule behind Sulu blast despite terror group's claim



Francis Chan

Indonesia Bureau Chief  
In Jakarta

The bombing of a Roman Catholic cathedral in the Philippine province of Sulu on Sunday is a deadly reminder that churches

remain a symbolic target of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), following similar attacks claimed by the militant group in France, Egypt, Russia and Indonesia in recent years.

Despite ISIS' claim for the latest strike, Manila seems to prefer to believe that it was perpetrated by domestic militants opposed to the Jan 21 vote for self-rule in southern Muslim Mindanao.

But some observers are not entirely convinced that the attack, which left at least 20 people dead, is related to the referendum. They believe the incident may have wider security implications for

South-east Asia.

"The cathedral bombing may not be the last tragic event in Muslim Mindanao as the entire region transitions from war to peace and from deprivation to development," International Alert, a conflict think-tank, said on Tuesday. "In fact, there is no credible evidence that the bombing had anything to do with the recent plebiscite."

Coming just months after the suicide attacks on three churches in Surabaya last May, the Sulu attack may just be the harbinger of the long-feared migration of ISIS elements from the Middle East to South-east Asia, where remnants of the group hope to set up a caliphate.

Veteran security observer Bilveer Singh believes the Sulu attack is significant as it is the first one targeting churches or security

forces in the Philippines since Islamic militants who mounted the siege of Marawi were defeated in 2017. "The latest (ISIS)-claimed attacks are a revenge for Marawi, and those who are against IS and what they stand for," the adjunct senior fellow at the Centre of Excellence for National Security told The Straits Times on Monday.

In May 2017, more than 1,000 radicals from the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups loyal to ISIS stormed and took control of Marawi in a bid to turn the city into a caliphate.

What followed was five months of intense gunfights between militants and security forces as well as military air strikes that left 1,200 people, mostly militants, dead. Surviving fighters fled to remote areas to regroup.

One of those killed in the fighting

was Isnlon Hapilon, the so-called "emir" of ISIS in South-east Asia, whose death represented a major scalp for the war on terror then.

Still, rarely has a militant group stood down completely after the death or capture of a leader, or after it lost territory like ISIS did in Syria.

Experts have warned that the recent decimation of ISIS in the Middle East has done nothing more than force the group to go underground and shift its focus to what it has long yearned for – a base in this part of the world.

South-east Asia, which comprises countries with large Muslim communities such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, remains a fertile recruiting ground for ISIS and Al-Qaeda, via their local affiliates like Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD).

Analysts from New York-based global security think-tank Soufan Center, said the US withdrawal of 7,000 of its troops from Afghanistan will likely offer terror groups like Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent more room to manoeuvre amid growing sectarianism in South Asia, and pose a threat further east to China.

Last week, Singapore's Home Affairs Ministry said that while there has not been any specific intelligence of an impending attack on the Republic since 2017, terrorism remains a danger as more radicalised individuals are uncovered in the city-state and terror groups continue to make their presence felt globally.

Countering radicalisation also continues to be a key challenge for security agencies across the region.

In Singapore, eight self-radicalised individuals were dealt with under the Internal Security Act in the past two years. This brings the total number of Singaporeans dealt with under the Act since 2015 to 22 – double the number between 2007 and 2014.

Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, has been a linchpin for Muslim militants trying to establish a caliphate in the region. Although Jakarta has succeeded in locking up radical clerics such as Jemaah Islamiah spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir and JAD founder Aman Abdurrahman, both men still wield strong influence behind bars.

Associate Professor Singh said the Sulu bombing carries a strategic significance for militants in the region in that it demonstrates that groups such as Abu Sayyaf and ISIS are alive and well, and that "we can expect more follow-up attacks".

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Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte visiting the damaged cathedral in Jolo, Sulu province, on Monday. The twin bombings during Sunday mass killed at least 21 people and injured more than 100 others. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

## 2 killed in mosque blast in southern Philippines

Raul Dancel  
Philippines Correspondent  
In Manila

Two people were killed and at least four wounded in a grenade attack on a mosque early yesterday morning in Zamboanga city, a key gateway in the Philippines' restive south.

This occurred just three days after twin blasts rocked a Roman Catholic cathedral on Jolo island, south-west of Zamboanga, and left at least 21 dead and more than 100 injured.

Chief Inspector Shellamae Chang identified those killed as Mr Habil Rex, 46, and Mr Haj Sattal Bato, 47. Both were said to be Muslim missionaries.

An unidentified assailant reportedly lobbed a grenade at the Kama-haldikaan mosque, in Talon district, where about 10 people on a Muslim retreat were sleeping, just past midnight yesterday.

One investigator told online news site Rappler that a safety lever of a Belgian-made grenade was recovered at the scene.

In a statement, the Ulama Council of Zamboanga Peninsula called the attack "devilish, irrational and inhumane".

President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman Salvador Panelo said in a text message: "Terrorism has once again reared its barbaric and ugly head. The successive attacks on two different places of worship depict the ruthlessness and the godlessness of these mass murderers."

Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a news conference yesterday that it was possible that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group could also be behind the attack on the mosque.

ISIS has claimed responsibility



Personal belongings left behind in Kamahaldikaan mosque. An unidentified assailant reportedly lobbed a grenade at the mosque in Talon district, Zamboanga City, where about 10 people on a Muslim retreat were sleeping, just past midnight yesterday. The attack took place just three days after twin blasts rocked a Roman Catholic cathedral on Jolo Island. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

for Sunday's cathedral bombing, which it said was carried out by suicide bombers.

"ISIS may want to bring it to a higher level of religious war. But Catholics, Christians and even mainstream Muslims are not biting into that," he said. For now, he said, "there doesn't seem to be any connection".

Security forces are currently chasing after militants from the Ajang-ajang faction of the Abu Sayyaf, a small but brutal gang of self-styled Muslim militants founded in the 1990s with seed money from Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network.

Initial investigations showed that

the two blasts that tore through the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel were set off remotely using a cellphone, and were not a suicide attack.

Wading into the issue, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin said in a tweet: "Now the mayhem is interfaith. That means the secession is over, and plain vanilla mass murder has taken over."

Security officials, though, advised against painting the Jolo and Zamboanga attacks as a religious conflict. "It is not a retaliatory act," Colonel Leonel Nicolas, commander of Joint Task Force Zamboanga, said of the attack on the mosque.

Lieutenant-General Arnel de la Vega, chief of the Western Mindanao Command, called suggestions of a religion-defined war "fake news".

A local militant, meanwhile, was killed in a raid on Tuesday on a home where one of the suspects in the Jolo attack was hiding.

Colonel Gerry Besana, spokesman for the Western Mindanao Command, said Ommal Usop, 64, was killed when he drew a firearm as security forces were swooping down on his home. Usop is said to be a kin of a certain "alias Kamah", who was suspected to be a key planner of the bombing. Kamah and one other

unidentified man managed to flee. Only Kamah was seen in CCTV footage running away seconds after the first bomb exploded inside the Jolo cathedral. Usop, however, is a known Abu Sayyaf militant.

President Duterte said on Tuesday the twin blasts that rocked the Jolo cathedral may have been a suicide attack carried out by the Abu Sayyaf, citing a briefing given to him by military commanders. "It exploded. That is terrorism and suicide," he said when asked by reporters to clarify an earlier remark.

He said a woman wearing a crucifix detonated a bomb inside the cathedral, and that a male compan-

ion had blown himself up outside minutes later.

Military investigators, however, have said bystanders saw a woman, presumably the female bomber, put a bag onto a wooden pew and leave the cathedral shortly before the blasts. They also believe the second bomb was rigged onto a motorcycle parked just outside the church's compound.

Mr Lorenzana told reporters yesterday "the suicide bombing theory is hanging in the air. It appears to be suicide bombing... but we're still waiting for confirmation".

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## Polluted air forcing Bangkok schools to close

BANGKOK • Choking air pollution has prompted schools to close in the Thai capital of Bangkok for the rest of the week and people celebrating next week's Chinese New Year holiday were urged to curb the use of incense and fireworks.

Air quality in Bangkok is hovering at unhealthy levels as the amount of hazardous dust particles known as PM2.5 exceeded the safe level in 41 areas around the capital, according to the Department of Pollution Control.

PM2.5 is a mixture of liquid droplets and solid particles that can include dust, soot and smoke, one of the main measures of the Air Quality Index.

The index was 175 at midday yesterday, according to AirVisual.com, which measures levels in cities worldwide, making Bangkok the fifth most polluted city.

India's capital, New Delhi, ranked first at 257.

Classes in more than 400 public schools in Bangkok were cancelled

at noon yesterday while other public and private schools in Bangkok and surrounding provinces will be closed tomorrow and on Friday, government spokesman Puttipong Punnnakan told reporters.

"We will assess the situation on Saturday and Sunday to see whether there would be the need to close all schools further next week," Mr Puttipong said, adding that some exams scheduled for the weekend might also need to be postponed.

Measures taken by the govern-

ment, including seeding rain clouds, regulating truck traffic and hosing down streets, have so far failed to clear the air.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha, leader of Thailand's military government, said he is also seeking temporary closure of some factories during pollution spikes to tackle the problem.

He added that he is ordering soldiers to inspect and report back on the worst polluters. REUTERS, BLOOMBERG



A pupil wearing a mask in Bangkok yesterday. More than 400 public schools in the Thai capital were closed at noon yesterday due to pollution. PHOTO: REUTERS



# Pahang Sultan takes oath as king today

KUALA LUMPUR • The Sultan of Pahang, Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, will ascend the throne as Malaysia's new king at Istana Negara today.

Sultan Abdullah is scheduled to take his oath of office as the 16th king in a ceremony that will be witnessed by other Malay rulers, reported Bernama news agency.

The 59-year-old was elected king last week after a special meeting of the Conference of Rulers.

Sultan Abdullah succeeds Sultan Muhammad V, the ruler of Kelan-

tan, who abdicated on Jan 6 after having reigned for about two years. Sultan Muhammad V's abdication followed news that he had married a Russian beauty queen outside Malaysia.

Sultan Abdullah had succeeded his ailing father as ruler of Pahang earlier this month.

He will reign as Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or Supreme Ruler, for five years.

The Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, will also take his oath of office as the deputy king.

The 62-year-old had been serving as acting king after the abdication.

He will continue his previous role as deputy for the next five years.

About 500 guests – including members of royal families, government officials and other dignitaries – are expected to attend the ceremony steeped in tradition.

The Pahang government declared a special state holiday today to enable the people to witness the event.



A worker spraying insecticide in Bintaro, South Tangerang, last Thursday. To control the dengue outbreak, Indonesia has distributed larvicide and fogging equipment to affected areas. PHOTO: THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

# Indonesia sees spike in dengue cases

Over 13,000 cases so far, with number of deaths rising to 133 from 43 in January 2018

**Linda Yulisman**  
Indonesia Correspondent  
In Jakarta

There has been a sharp spike in dengue cases in Indonesia this year with more than 13,000 recorded so far, more than twice the number for the same period last year.

The number of deaths has also jumped – to 133 this month from 43 in January last year.

The Health Ministry attributed the spike to greater rainfall intensity as well as humidity, and the government has moved to implement measures to curb the spread of the viral disease.

January and February are forecast to be the peak of the rainy season on the archipelago this year.

"Water is abundant now. The humidity and temperature affect the mosquitoes, so they can live longer and their eggs hatch faster," said Ms Siti Nadia Tarmizi, the Health Ministry's director for vector-borne and zoonotic diseases, at a press briefing yesterday.

Dengue is transmitted through

bites from the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

However, she said that the government had yet to declare a dengue emergency for the whole country despite the sharp rise in cases.

So far, only four regions – the city of Kupang and West Manggarai regency in East Nusa Tenggara, Kapuas regency in Central Kalimantan and North Sulawesi province – have declared a health emergency.

"Indeed, we've seen an increase (in cases) in January, but the figure is much lower compared with the average number in past years," said Ms Siti.

2x

Increase in dengue cases in Indonesia this month, compared with the same period last year.

Official figures show that Indonesia recorded more than 120,000 dengue cases each year between 2005 and last year.

More than 1,000 people have died from the disease annually.

But 2016 was an exceptionally bad year with 204,171 cases and 1,598 fatalities.

Ms Siti said that to control the outbreak, the health ministry has distributed larvicide and fogging equipment to affected regions.

It has also raised awareness among communities to destroy mosquito breeding grounds by burying, draining and covering objects that can store water.

Ms Inda Mutiara, head of infectious, vector-borne and zoonotic diseases at the Jakarta health agency, was also at the news briefing. She said her office had, among other things, funnelled larvicide to all villages in the capital as part of its efforts to fight the disease.

Jakarta reported 430 cases of dengue in the first three weeks of this year, nearly four times the number for the same period last year, although no fatalities were recorded.

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SEE HOME B1

# Gag order issued as East Coast Rail Link talks continue

PETALING JAYA • The Malaysian Cabinet has issued a gag order while negotiations with the Chinese contractor of the multi-billion-dollar East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project are ongoing, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said yesterday.

Mr Lim said the ministers discussed the matter during the Cabinet meeting, and they decided that only Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad would speak on the issue.

"This is a G2G (government-to-government) discussion, and it should be held away from the public glare," he told a news conference at the Finance Ministry.

"The official statement will be released when it is ready. And no other ministers are allowed to make any statements on the matter, but the Prime Minister," he said.

The Straits Times reported last week that the government had cancelled the original contract with the state-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC).

The Malaysian government is said to be seeking to halve the estimated project cost to RM40 billion (\$13 billion).

There have been conflicting statements over the past few days on the status of the controversial RM81 billion project, which was meant to link the east and west coasts of Peninsular Malaysia.

The project was approved by the previous Barisan Nasional administration in October 2016. But work on the 688km railway line was suspended last July by the Pakatan Harapan government amid criticism over the project's high cost.

Some 15 per cent of the project, to span across four states, had been completed by then.

Last Saturday, Economic Affairs

Minister Azmin Ali was quoted as saying that the government had decided to cancel the project. But Mr Lim said hours later that he was "shocked" by the announcement.

On Tuesday, Tun Dr Mahathir said the government had not decided yet on the project and that negotiations were ongoing. Earlier that day, he said Malaysia would be "impooverished" if the government proceeds with the project.

He told reporters that the compensation for cancelling the ECRL would be significantly lower than the debt the government would have to pay for the next 30 years if it was continued.

Meanwhile, industry sources told The Star that the CCCC is still holding out for an amicable solution amid uncertainty surrounding the project's future. THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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# British vote ups risk of messy no-deal Brexit: EU

Bloc leader says deal cannot be renegotiated even after UK Parliament voted for changes



European Union leader Jean-Claude Juncker said the pact British Prime Minister Theresa May (above) sealed with the 27 EU leaders last month "remains the best and only deal possible".

Rebecca Lynne Tan

European Union leader Jean-Claude Juncker warned yesterday that the British Parliament's decision to demand changes to the Brexit withdrawal deal had increased the risk of a messy "no deal" divorce, as he insisted the deal cannot be renegotiated.

"Yesterday's vote increased the risk of a disorderly withdrawal," the president of the European Commission told the European Parliament.

"We need to be ready for all scenarios, including the worst."

Mr Juncker said the pact British Prime Minister Theresa May sealed with the 27 EU leaders last month "remains the best and only deal possible".

"The debates and votes in the House of Commons yesterday will not change that. The withdrawal agreement will not be renegotiated."

British MPs had late on Tuesday voted through an amendment saying they would support a deal for Britain's withdrawal from the EU only if a controversial "backstop" clause to keep the Irish border open was removed.

Mrs May said she would seek to revisit the pact and bring back a revised deal by Feb 13.

But European leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, yesterday joined Mr Juncker in reiterating the EU's refusal to reopen negotiations less than two months before Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29.

As things stand, the British Parliament's series of votes on the current Brexit plan added little clarity to the path forward for the country as the deadline inches ever closer. Two weeks after Parliament resoundingly rejected Mrs May's plan to leave Europe, the main outcome of Tuesday's votes was to back what amounted to her Plan B – to seek "alternative arrangements" with the EU to replace the Irish backstop.

The backstop, designed to prevent a return of a hard border between British-ruled Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland, is viewed as the most contentious part of Mrs May's exit deal.

It is strongly opposed by hardline Brexiters who say it binds Britain with the EU in perpetuity.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said yesterday Brexit negotiators have spent two years looking at alternatives to the backstop and have not found any that work. Possible options included time limits, exit clauses and technological solutions.

"We have been through all of these things. We have tested them and we have found that they do not stand up to scrutiny, and now we have a British prime minister advocating again for the same things that were tested," Mr Coveney said.

Ambassadors of the 27 EU member states were due to meet yesterday to discuss Brexit, and Mrs May will speak to European Council president Donald Tusk by phone late on Wednesday afternoon (early Thursday morning Singapore time).

Apart from supporting one back-up option for Mrs May, however, British lawmakers on Tuesday also narrowed down some of the other options.

They voted down an amendment to delay Brexit by extending Article 50 to the end of the year if the government does not agree on a plan by the end of next month, even though there were indications that the EU would have accepted a request for an extension.

Lawmakers also supported an amendment that rules out Britain bowing out of the bloc without a deal, the so-called no-deal Brexit, although the amendment was non-binding.

Most MPs had said that they would "support a deal with changes to the backstop, combined with measures to address concerns over Parliament's role in the negotiation of the future relationship and commitments on workers rights".

Addressing the House after the series of votes, Mrs May said: "It is now clear that there is a route that can secure a substantial and sustainable majority in this House for leaving the EU with a deal."

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn met Mrs May for talks yesterday, having previously rejected her invitations. A Labour spokesman said they had a "useful exchange of views" on the next steps for Brexit and agreed to meet again.

Commenting on the impact of Brexit, Professor David De Cremer of the National University of Singapore Business School said there will be a repositioning of the economic and political dynamics of Asian countries with Britain.

He added that Asian countries, having seen Britain as a gateway to the EU, will have to focus more on the EU directly. Likewise, companies around the world will also turn their focus to Asia, given its growing markets and middle class.

"We would like to see the EU showing more engagement in Asia, as that has been quite limited compared with the UK's," said Prof De Cremer. "This could be a competitive advantage for the EU. The EU, which is a big economic market, will have a stronger advantage over the UK because of its sheer size, and China being the biggest piece of the pie."

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A pro-Brexit activist (left) and an anti-Brexit activist demonstrating outside the Houses of Parliament on Tuesday. Britain is legally on track to leave the European Union with or without a deal on March 29, unless it delays or stops the process. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## What's next for UK?

LONDON • With Prime Minister Theresa May saying she will try to renegotiate the Brexit deal she herself struck with the European Union, it remains unclear how or when Britain will leave the EU.

Three ultimate scenarios remain: leaving with Mrs May's deal renegotiated or resurrected, leaving without an official agreement or no Brexit at all.

Here are the potential next steps.

### TRY TO ALTER THE DEAL

MPs on Tuesday narrowly passed a government-backed amendment giving Mrs May a mandate to renegotiate her Brexit deal with the EU, after it was roundly rejected in Parliament earlier this month.

The key sticking point is the agreement's "backstop" solution to keep the Irish border open, which has the potential to leave Britain indefinitely tied to some form of EU Customs union.

Influential Brexit supporters have convinced Mrs May to swing behind the new strategy and try to

get the EU to agree to legally binding changes to the backstop.

EU leaders have said they are willing to talk further, including on plans for the future trading relationship, but have repeatedly said they will not reopen the legally binding withdrawal agreement itself.

### NO DEAL

Britain is legally on track to leave the EU with or without a deal on March 29, unless it delays or stops the process.

A no-deal scenario threatens to trigger a recession in Britain and markedly slow the EU's economic growth as well as causing significant legal disruption.

One of the world's biggest economies could lose preferential access to its largest export market overnight – affecting every sector, leading to rising costs and disruption at British ports.

### DELAY

Speculation has been growing that the government will instead seek to

postpone the Brexit process.

But other amendments introduced in Parliament on Tuesday to legally force a delay in Britain's departure date were rejected by MPs.

Political analysts argue lawmakers could still back such a postponement further down the line, although all the other 27 EU countries would have to agree.

A potential complication is that elections to the European Parliament are due in late May and the new chamber is set to sit on July 2. Some of Britain's 73 seats have already been reallocated.

### SECOND REFERENDUM

Growing numbers of MPs are seeking a new referendum to reverse the 2016 result, when the Leave campaign won by 52 per cent to 48 per cent.

But supporters admit they currently do not have the numbers in Parliament to make it happen.

No law prevents Britain from doing it all over again but many question whether a revote would be

democratic – or resolve anything. It also threatens to be just as divisive as the last one, with opinion polls showing the country is still split over the issue.

### GENERAL ELECTION

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn sought to oust Mrs May's government by calling a confidence vote after her Brexit deal was defeated, but she won.

There is a risk that her Conservative Party and their Northern Irish allies, the Democratic Unionist Party, could turn against her if she pursues either a "softer" or a no-deal Brexit. But if not, the only other way to force an election is for the Prime Minister herself to gamble and call a snap vote to break the impasse.

### NO BREXIT

Some lawmakers favour the nuclear option of cancelling Brexit altogether, despite the threat of widespread public rage.

Speaking to business leaders on a conference call hours after Mrs May's deal was rejected by MPs earlier this month, Finance Minister Philip Hammond reportedly told them Article 50 could be "re-scinded" to avoid the risk of a no-deal Brexit. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### News analysis

## PM May buys time for party to decide on Brexit

LONDON • If Britain's Parliament were the final arbiter of Brexit, Tuesday night's vote would have been historic. It would have been a crowning achievement for Prime Minister Theresa May: Leavers and Remainers, Conservatives and Labour Party members debated for six hours and voted seven times before a majority finally said what they want to happen.

It was not any of that. The European Union (EU) has already said "no" – in more languages and ways than is reasonable to count – to the one demand the majority voted in favour of: an alternative to the hated provision of Mrs May's Brexit deal that guarantees an open border in Ireland. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, deputy chief negotiator Sabine Weyand and French President Emmanuel Macron have all said the so-called backstop is not up for renegotiation.

But Mrs May did not spend almost two years in talks only to miss one of the EU's core negotiating pillars. Nor does she believe the EU is going to roll over simply because Parliament now has decided it wants cake and to eat it.

Not for the first time, Mrs May has simply played for time and delayed her moment of reckoning. She has bought her party some breathing room to decide what form of Brexit it wants.

Her hope is that while hardliners claim they are unafraid of a no-deal



Protesters destroying a mock wall erected during an anti-Brexit demonstration last Saturday at a road crossing the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

exit – something Parliament voted, symbolically, against on Tuesday – they also understand that it would be folly. The party that has historically stood for pragmatism and business would be punished for a generation if a hard Brexit turned out to be an economic disaster.

And Brexiters also recognise two key dangers in what lies ahead: one, that Mrs May might rely on the Labour Party's support to pass a deal that they dislike even more than the existing one; and, two, that an impasse would mean throwing the issue to the electorate, either through a referendum or an

**Tuesday's vote makes perfect sense. Mrs May is able to go to Brussels and ask, one final time, for its last, best offer to make the backstop more palatable. She will not get the wholesale change she is demanding, but she will perhaps get something more than she has so far.**

election, with unpredictable consequences. In this light, Tuesday's vote makes perfect sense. Mrs May is able to go to Brussels and ask, one final time, for its last, best offer to make the backstop more palatable. She will not get the wholesale change she is demanding, but she will perhaps get something more than she has so far.

Then, on Feb 14, Parliament will have to vote again – and this time the Brexiters will have to own their decision. A vote against her deal risks either splitting the party or seeing Brexit reversed. There is every likelihood that lawmakers opposed to leaving the EU will again attempt to demand an extension to the Article 50 timetable.

It is, therefore, decision time for hardliners like Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, Mr Boris Johnson and their allies. They are pulled by two equally beguiling forces. On the one hand, there is ideological purism, which feeds a certain vanity and provides a certain sense of potency. On the other, though, is the pull of tribe and the appeal of unity.

Tuesday's vote was the first time in a long while that the Conservatives have looked united and sure about anything. It was the first day in many where Mrs May's

own party members gave so many supportive speeches. They may like the feel of that unity, and enough of them may want to find a way to preserve it.

The last time they had that feeling, though, Mrs May was standing up at Lancaster House, setting out negotiating stances that turned out to be impossible to deliver. She told her party she would lead them out of the single market and out of the Customs union; she told the EU and Ireland she would honour the Good Friday Agreement pledge to keep the Irish border open; she then lost her parliamentary majority and that made her red lines even more complicated.

On Tuesday, her promise was simpler: She will seek to renegotiate the part of the exit treaty Brexiters hate. But when she comes back with less than they want, they will still have to decide between ideological purism and a deal that preserves party unity and secures Brexit.

For now, Mrs May has kept her deal just about alive, retained control over the process, and proved that a majority in favour of something can be achieved in Parliament. In the circumstances, it is an achievement of sorts.

BLOOMBERG



# Cyber park key to Israel’s economy: PM Netanyahu

Campus brings together top cyber-security powers, start-ups and potential workforce

**Irene Tham**  
Senior Tech Correspondent  
In Tel Aviv

A decision to allow graduates of its military intelligence unit to create companies and make money has turned Israel into a cyber-security powerhouse, and the country will continue to do so to grow its economic wealth, said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Pointing to its cyber-security and technology park in Be’er Sheva – a city in the Negev desert of southern Israel – Mr Netanyahu said the site is key to continuous innovation.

“Here’s a... cyber park of some of the leading cyber-security powers and it’s all within 200m walking distance,” he said at the sixth annual Cybertech conference on Tuesday.

Formed in 2014, the park is home to the Israel Defence Forces, the Computer Emergency Response Team for addressing civilian cyber-security incidents and a cyber-security start-up arena known as CyberSpark.

The Ben-Gurion University, Israel’s top school for cyber security, is nearby too.

EMC, Deutsche Telekom, PayPal, Oracle, IBM and Lockheed Martin have already set up shop there. There are goals to create 20,000 to

30,000 jobs in Be’er Sheva by 2026.

Graduates from the military and the nearby university form a steady supply of potential workforce. They work with local and foreign business partners on start-up ideas. The government provides generous funding of between US\$500,000 (\$\$676,250) and US\$750,000 per start-up, to be paid back only if the company is successful.

Mr Netanyahu said Israel wants to continue to lead in cyber security and other high-growth areas like mobility, health and food.

“We have to make sure that we have economic partners. And the economic partners that we have depend on our ability to merge the graduates of our security units into a business community,” he said, referring to the Be’er Sheva site, where connections are forged.

The park is a re-creation of what Mr Netanyahu saw at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Silicon Valley in San Francisco.

“I decided several years ago to turn Israel into one of the five cyber powers of the world and that required allowing this combination of military intelligence, academia and industry to converge in one place,” he said.

Singapore is planning a similar version in Punggol North, with



DIGITAL REVOLUTION

**What this revolution is doing – big data, AI (artificial intelligence) and connectivity – is allowing small countries to be big countries.**



**ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BENJAMIN NETANYAHU**, on turning his country into one of the world’s five cyber powers.

plans to move its high-level Cyber Security Agency of Singapore – currently in Maxwell Road – to the district. The 50ha Punggol Digital District will be a centre for digital and cyber-security industries that could generate up to 28,000 digital economy jobs.

First announced last year, the first buildings are expected to be ready in five years.

Even though Israel has a population of just 8.6 million people, it is the world’s second-biggest cyber-

security product exporter, after the United States. Besides exporting US\$6.5 billion in cyber-security products yearly, Israel also attracts 20 per cent of the global private investments in such products.

“What this revolution is doing – big data, AI (artificial intelligence) and connectivity – is allowing small countries to be big countries,” Mr Netanyahu said at the three-day conference which ended yesterday.

“If you have the brains and the system to create conceptual products in an accelerated rate, (it will) give you a competitive advantage.”

Israel has one of the world’s highest concentrations of start-ups, with 6,500 of them specialising in many areas including cyber security, mobile apps and machine learning.

But it is trailing behind the US and China in AI. For instance, it has over 360 AI start-ups compared with over 1,390 in the US and over 380 in China. A blueprint for AI is in the works to grow Israel’s influence in this area.

The military is known to look for people with “rosh gadol”, which in Hebrew means “big head”.

“To survive, we need a very big head,” said Mr Netanyahu.

“And this head – we invest in. We take our brightest people and put them in. We look at the entire population, we go into the high schools, we’re going to go to kindergartens very soon.”

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# Huawei exec appears in court as Canada mulls over extradition

**VANCOUVER** • Huawei Technologies’ chief financial officer, the central figure in a high-stakes dispute between the world’s two largest economies, made her first appearance in a Canadian court in more than a month as Ottawa weighs extraditing the Chinese executive to the United States.

Meng Wanzhou, daughter of the Chinese telecommunications company’s founder, attended the hearing on Tuesday at the British Columbia Supreme Court, where Justice William Ehrcke approved her request for a change to her bail bond guarantor.

Canada arrested Meng on Dec 1 at the request of the US, which on Monday brought sweeping charges against Huawei and Meng that paint



**Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou** appeared in a Canadian court for the first time in over a month on Tuesday.

the company as a threat to US national security. Meng was charged with bank and wire fraud to violate American sanctions against Iran.

“I can confirm that the US has filed a formal request with my department for the extradition of Ms Meng,” Justice Minister David Lametti told reporters in Ottawa.

Canada’s government now has a month to decide if the US extradition request is strong enough to be

presented to a British Columbia court. Mr Lametti, when asked whether a decision could come sooner than 30 days, said officials “will take the time they need to make an enlightened decision based on the evidence in front of them.”

Neither Mr Lametti nor Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland gave any hints on whether Canada would back the extradition request. Ms Freeland told reporters Meng “has been afforded access to Canada’s impartial and objective judicial system”.

On Dec 11, Mr Ehrcke approved Meng’s release on C\$10 million (\$\$10.2 million) bail, and she has since stayed at a family residence in Vancouver.

At Tuesday’s hearing, Mr Ehrcke

also postponed Meng’s next scheduled court appearance by a month to March 6, which comes after the 30-day extradition decision deadline.

The arrest of Meng, who is fighting extradition, further aggravated US-China tensions at a time when the two economic powerhouses are locked in a trade war.

China’s foreign ministry has urged the US to drop the arrest warrant against Meng and end “unreasonable suppression” of Chinese companies. China has also demanded the executive’s immediate release.

In Ottawa, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said Canada’s decision on whether to ban Huawei from supplying equipment to 5G networks is “some ways off into the future”. Mr Goodale’s comments were the most specific indication from Ottawa on the timing of the politically-sensitive announcement. REUTERS

SEE OPINION A24



China Unicom technicians testing the equipment at a newly built 5G network base station in Tongling, Anhui province, on Tuesday. China said the first commercial 5G smartphones are likely to become a reality this year. PHOTO: REUTERS

# China to step up efforts on 5G tech development

**BEIJING** • China will ratchet up efforts to commercialise 5G communication technology, and welcomes foreign enterprises to join the process as part of the country’s push to expand opening-up policies, the top industry regulator said.

Mr Wen Ku, a spokesman for the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a news conference on Tuesday that the first

commercial 5G smartphones are likely to become a reality this year.

“Chinese enterprises will deepen their partnerships with foreign companies so that global consumers can benefit from faster telecommunications and other 5G-related services as soon as possible,” Mr Wen added.

Foreign technology firms have played an active role in China’s

third-phase 5G tests – which ended in December – and they have prepared pre-commercial devices, he said.

The comments came as China conducts trial operations of 5G systems in several cities and aims to fully commercialise the superfast technology by 2020.

A test for virtual reality live transmission via the 5G network in China was successfully completed on Monday.

The broadcast, enabled by telecom equipment maker Huawei’s technology, will allow TV audiences to have a panoramic view of this year’s Spring Festival gala.

Chinese Minister of Industry and Information Technology Miao Wei also called on the US government to stop the “wrong practice” of putting restrictions on exporting US technology and products to Fujian Jinhua Integrated Circuit, a major Chinese chipmaker.

“The US Commerce Department is misusing national security concerns and abusing export control measures.”

“It is groundless for a country to use such excuses to put an export ban on a company that is still under construction, and has not yet started mass production,” Mr Miao said. CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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# Polar vortex puts US in deep freeze

Temperatures expected to drop as low as -40 deg C in some parts

CHICAGO • A blast of Arctic air from the polar vortex brought dangerous, bone-chilling cold to a wide swathe of the United States, stretching from the Dakotas through Maine, with snow expected as far south as Alabama and Georgia.

The Midwest was the hardest-hit region, as temperatures plunged below minus 18 deg C on Tuesday. By nightfall, the mercury was hovering at minus 18 deg C in Chicago, minus 14 deg C in Detroit and minus 29 deg C in Minneapolis.

Local television pictures showed the Chicago River and Lake Michigan filled with chunks of ice.

The brutal blast known as the polar vortex is a stream of cold air that spins around the stratosphere over the North Pole, but whose current has been disrupted and is now pushing south into the US.

Officials warned Chicago residents, accustomed to chilling winters, to expect an unusually deep and dangerous freeze. Even the city's supply of its signature deep-dish pizza was affected: The Lou Malnati's chain stopped taking delivery orders at 8pm on Tuesday.

"This could possibly be history-making," said Mr Ricky Castro, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Romeoville, Illinois.

As much as 60cm of snow was forecast in Wisconsin, and 15cm in Illinois. Snow was expected to fall until at least yesterday from the Great Lakes region to New England.

Some Chicago residents found warmth inside the Harold Washington Library Centre.

Mr Gilbert Rothschild, the president of a liquor retailer, walked through a corridor wearing three sweaters and an undershirt underneath his parka. "The more layers, the more you're insulated", the 79-year-old said.



Many Midwest cities opened warming shelters. Regional governments closed hundreds of schools and airlines cancelled more than 2,000 flights, according to the Flightaware flight tracking website. Many had been destined for Atlanta, where the National Football League's Super Bowl will take place on Sunday.

Ms Amy Patterson, a vice-presi-

dent at the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee, said there would still be time for fans to fly to Atlanta for the game, with the National Weather Service (NWS) forecasting a high of a balmy 14 deg C on Sunday.

A low of minus 23 deg C was forecast in Chicago and elsewhere in northern Illinois yesterday. But with the wind chill factored in, temperatures would feel as low as mi-

nus 46 deg C until today, the NWS reported.

Temperatures were forecast to reach lows of minus 34 deg C to minus 40 deg C in parts of the Northern Plains and Great Lakes yesterday, the NWS said.

The freezing weather may have killed a man in Rochester, Minnesota, who was found dead outside his home on Sunday, according to a

report by WCCO radio station.

In Chicago, classes were expected to be cancelled for all 360,000 students yesterday. Detroit also said all public schools would close, and Michigan State University said it would suspend classes.

According to the NWS, the coldest recorded temperature in Chicago was minus 33 deg C on Jan 20, 1985.

REUTERS

The Chicago River in Chicago, Illinois, was filled with chunks of ice. A low of -23 deg C was forecast in the city yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## What is the polar vortex and why is it so cold?

CHICAGO • Meteorologists have blamed a phenomenon called the polar vortex for the bitter cold that has descended on much of the central and eastern United States this week, forcing residents to huddle indoors, closing schools and businesses and cancelling flights.

As ominous as the term "polar vortex" sounds, meteorologists say the phenomenon is not new, nor, despite its sound, does it refer to a cyclone of cold or a freakishly dangerous storm.

"The term 'polar vortex' has become more commonly used in the past couple of years but the phenomenon has been around forever," National Weather Service me-

teorologist Mark Chenard said.

There is some debate among scientists about whether polar vortices have become more frequent and, if so, what effect climate change might be having on them.

Mr Chenard said a polar vortex refers to the upper-level jet stream that typically circulates around both the North and South Poles, keeping the coldest air there.

When that jet stream occasionally weakens and buckles, he said, it disrupts weather patterns - bumping warmer air into Alaska and pushing cold winds down into the US Midwest and East Coast. "This (winter) happens to be a pretty extreme example of some of that cold arctic

air making it down to us," he said.

Though the potentially record-shattering low temperatures descending on a large swathe of the country may touch off a political debate over global warming, Mr Chenard said, the phenomenon is not related to climate change.

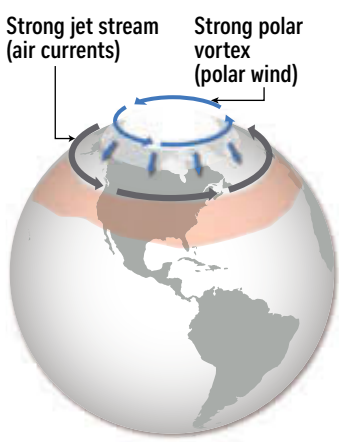
Dr Jennifer Francis, senior scientist and Arctic expert at the Woods Hole Research Centre, said that while the latest move in the polar vortex "may unleash claims that global warming is a hoax", the mass of frigid air over North America is far outweighed by areas elsewhere that are warmer than usual.

She said modelling studies offer evidence that the stratosphere over the Arctic is changing and so disruptions to polar vortices are increasing. "We are seeing this more often and there are a few studies suggesting that the melting and warming of the Arctic make these disruptions more likely than they used to be," she said. REUTERS

## Changes in the Arctic

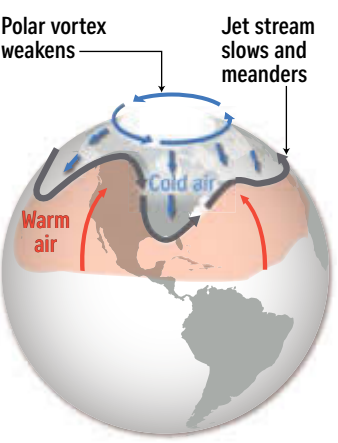
### NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Strong polar vortex and jet stream trap freezing air in the Arctic and warm air in lower latitudes

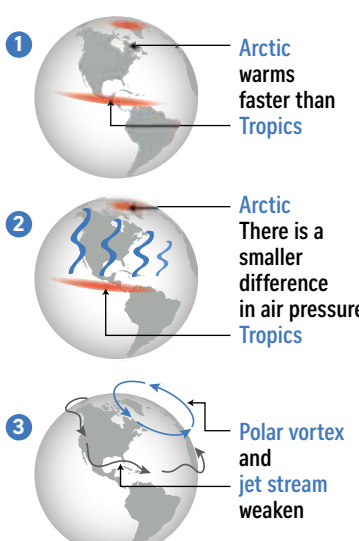


### ARCTIC WARMS FASTER THAN LOWER LATITUDES

Polar vortex and jet stream weaken, so Arctic air moves south and warm air moves north



### HOW CLIMATE CHANGE DISRUPTS THE POLAR VORTEX



Source: AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

## News analysis

# Race to replace nuclear power, coal puts strain on Germany



Markus Ziener

Global Affairs Correspondent In Berlin

Once a distant prospect, Germany is now increasingly facing the reality that it will have to transform itself as it seeks new energy supplies to replace nuclear power and coal.

A few days ago, the coal commission agreed to end the use of coal power by 2038 in a landmark decision.

Germany is the last major north-western European state to use coal, which provides nearly 40 per cent of power in the country.

Drivers of diesel-engine cars are already feeling the effects of meeting emission goals. For one, diesel vehicles are prohibited from entering the centres of major German cities. At the same time, questions are being asked if the policy that allows German motorways to have no speed limits can be maintained in the era of climate change.

Over the next three years, the government will also shut down all seven active nuclear plants in the country.

The about-face in German energy policies was triggered by the Fukushima Daiichi disaster in 2011, when a major earthquake and tsunami caused a nuclear accident at the power plant about 300km north of Tokyo, and the anti-nuclear protests that later broke out in Germany.

Soon after, German Chancellor Angela Merkel reversed a policy decision made just months earlier to extend the life of the nuclear power plants, announcing that nuclear energy would instead be phased out completely.

Nuclear energy, once supplying a third of the country's power needs, today provides a little more than 10 per cent of the national energy mix.

In comparison, Germany's neighbour France still operates 58 nuclear power plants, which contribute about 70 per cent of the national energy supply.

Part of the nuclear power that France produces, ironically, is also exported to Germany.

With the decision to also abandon coal - the dirtiest of fossil fuels - Germany is putting itself under enormous pressure.

Although environmentalists consider the deadline for phasing out coal too far in the future, in



A lignite-fired power station in Boxberg, Germany. Last week's decision by the coal commission to end the use of coal power by 2038 will also mean an end to brown coal mining, which now provides 32,000 jobs. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

economic terms, the country faces a Herculean task. Not only must nuclear power be offset by alternative energy sources, coal has to be substituted as well.

Only a few weeks ago, the last anthracite, or hard coal, mine closed in North Rhine-Westphalia, in the western part of Germany.

Last week's decision by the coal commission will also mean an end to brown coal mining, which now provides 32,000 jobs, according to figures from Rhineland-Westphalia Institute for Economic Research.

To minimise hardship for miners and their families, the government has earmarked €40 billion (\$61.8 billion) for the next two decades.

The decision to end coal use has been hailed by Professor Johan Rockstrom, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

"The whole world is watching how Germany - a nation based on industry and engineering, the fourth-largest economy on our planet - is taking the historic decision of phasing out coal," he said. "This could cascade globally, locking in the fastest energy transition in history."

How fast green energy can replace nuclear power and fossil fuels in Germany is unclear.

Currently, it provides only a third of the country's energy needs.

Although it is an increase from the 6 per cent that green energy provided to the total mix in 2000, there is greater urgency now for solar, wind, biomass and other renewable sources to overcome infrastructure challenges, to mitigate the shift from nuclear power and coal.

Wind power, largely generated in the north, has to be brought to the south, with new power lines which connect to power grids.

But people have protested against the construction works, citing the damage to nature.

Germany can buy time by importing its energy needs, but even that is not without controversy.

Despite pressure from the United States to abandon the idea, Berlin is sticking to the new pipeline project Nord Stream 2 with Russia.

The pipeline is expected to be completed by the end of this year, and could double the flow of Russian gas into Germany, which already receives about 40 per cent of its gas supply from Russia.

The Trump administration argues that Germany is becoming too dependent on Russian gas, and wants Berlin to instead buy US liquid gas, which is economically not attractive for Germany.

All this is happening while Berlin is under pressure to meet its international obligations. As one of the big emitters, Germany has to significantly reduce carbon emissions to meet climate change goals set in Paris in December 2015. At the same time, it is struggling with another limit set by the World Health Organisation - to fight pollution by limiting nitrogen oxide to a maximum of 40 micrograms per cubic m.

With many bigger cities in Germany exceeding this limit, the courts have had to step in to force the cities to ban older diesel engines, the key source of nitrogen oxide. Of about 15 million diesel cars on German roads, 10 million are or will not be permitted to enter cities like Stuttgart or Hamburg.

Diesel cars have dropped in value to an all-time low, and owners are now accusing the government of taking away their right to use the cars.

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# Sizzling heat in Australia driving snakes into toilets

**Hot, dry weather sending reptiles to seek cool and moist places**

**QUEENSLAND** • In Australia, snakes sometimes slither into suburban backyards and homes. When the weather gets warm, they lounge in the sun. When it gets hot, they seek cool places: a wall crevice, under a refrigerator, under a barbecue grille, behind an air-conditioning unit.

When it gets too hot and dry, they seek places with moisture, as some Australians are quickly learning.

Mr Luke Huntley, a snake catcher in Queensland, East Australia, has had to remove snakes from people's bathrooms, as the country experiences a record-setting heatwave.

Last week, he removed a 2m-long python that had slithered into an open door and climbed into the

shower not only to escape the heat but also to find water.

Days earlier, he pulled a small tree snake that had coiled in another homeowner's toilet bowl.

"With the hot days and dry weather, these snakes are trying to hydrate and stay cool just like us," Mr Huntley wrote on his Facebook page.

Also recently, an unsuspecting woman went into a dimly lit bathroom of a Brisbane home, not bothering to look into the toilet bowl. After she sat down, she felt a "tap" on her skin followed by a sharp pain, Ms Helen Richards told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

She looked down and saw a python looking up at her.

As a polar vortex hits the US Midwest, the extreme opposite is happening in Australia. The heatwave has parched landscapes, triggered

TRYING TO KEEP COOL

**With the hot days and dry weather, these snakes are trying to hydrate and stay cool just like us.**



**MR LUKE HUNTLEY**, a snake catcher in Queensland, writing on his Facebook page.

damaging wildfires, pushed demand on the power grid to the brink and toppled significant records, Capital Weather Gang's Angela Fritz wrote last week.

Temperatures soared to 47.7 deg C last Thursday in Adelaide, South Australia. That is the highest temperature for any capital in Australia, according to Ms Fritz.

In the south-eastern corner of the country, overnight temperatures were as high as 36 deg C – the warmest overnight lows for January anywhere in the world.

Australia's climate has warmed by just over 1 deg C since 1910, leading to more frequent heatwaves and severe drought conditions, according to the Bureau of Meteorology.

Eight of Australia's top-10 warmest years on record have happened in the past 13 years.

And with warmer weather come

more snake sightings. Snake season starts in September, the beginning of spring in Australia. It goes on throughout the summer, from December to February.

Australia has around 140 species of land snakes. As cities and urban development encroach into snake habitats, residents – and their pets – are more likely to encounter snakes, particularly in the spring, University of Melbourne researchers said.

"As it warms up and we get a bit more sun, snakes come out to bask," Dr Timothy Jackson, a research fellow at the university's Australian Venom Research Unit, said in September. "When they're warm enough, they get hungry – they may not have eaten for months."

Snakes, though, are not to be feared. "This is nothing to be alarmed about, but it does give us an additional reason to pay attention to our surroundings because, as we all know, encounters with snakes don't always end well," Dr Jackson said.

"It's important to understand that this isn't because snakes are out to get us. The last thing a snake wants to see when it's out looking for a feed is a giant primate, dog or cat."

Unfortunately, that has not always held true. Mr Huntley, the snake catcher, was called a couple of weeks ago to a home where a python ate a house cat. WASHINGTON POST

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The Straits Times says

# Huawei case has broad implications

The sweeping charges levelled against Chinese telecoms firm Huawei and its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou by United States officials this week could lead to a prolonged and bruising legal battle that can only heighten tensions between China and the US. There are also potentially serious international repercussions as Huawei operates globally and is the leading supplier of 5G networks in several countries. US officials have levelled 23 charges against Huawei, some of which also apply to Meng. Among them: misrepresenting the nature of Huawei's business with Iran to the US government and banks, in violation of US sanctions, stealing technology and obstructing justice.

While Meng, who is the daughter of Huawei's founder, fights possible extradition from Canada to the US, where she could face criminal proceedings, US officials claim that this is a judicial affair, unconnected with the ongoing US-China trade dispute. But there are reasons to doubt this claim, reinforced by US President Donald Trump's statement last month that he would be willing to intervene in Meng's extradition if it would help him reach a trade deal with China.

The issue of cyber security, which is at the heart of many of the accusations against Huawei, is also a major part of Washington's agenda in its trade talks with Beijing. For its part, Beijing has understandably reacted with outrage against the arrest

of Meng and demanded her immediate release. The arrest is certainly extraordinary; several institutions, including banks from the US, United Kingdom and France, have been found guilty of violating US sanctions against Iran, yet none of their senior officials have been arrested. Moreover, at least at the time of Meng's arrest, there was no solid evidence implicating Huawei in any espionage, other than an alleged attempt to steal trade secrets from a US robotics firm, which has already been resolved. So it is no surprise that the Chinese government as well as public opinion view the case as being more political than judicial.

The US, which has banned government use of Huawei equipment at home, has used its diplo-

matic clout to persuade some of its allies, including Japan, Australia and New Zealand, to do the same. This could hurt Huawei commercially but not critically, as the company has a global footprint, operating in more than 170 countries. However, it is commercially vulnerable to the extent that it still relies on imports of semiconductors from US suppliers. Thus, even as Huawei prepares to defend itself against the charges brought against it, Beijing, which regards the company as one of the country's technological crown jewels, will hopefully try to defuse this crisis through a negotiated settlement, such as a comprehensive, multi-government cyber security agreement, rather than resorting to retaliatory action.

## HomeFront

# Why import art fairs for S'pore? Look to local landscape instead

What lies ahead after the exit of Art Stage Singapore and the big international name associated with it? Another international fair is coming to these shores, but is that the way forward?



Akshita Nanda

Arts Correspondent

Out goes one, and in comes another. A new annual international art fair, ART SG – helmed by the founders of well-established Hong Kong art fairs Art Central and Art HK (now Art Basel Hong Kong) and backed by government agencies – is set to open in Singapore in November.

This, even as Singapore's main art fair, founded by Swiss national Lorenzo Rudolf of prestigious Art Basel pedigree, made an ignominious exit this month. Art Stage Singapore was cancelled on Jan 16, only eight days before its preview evening at Marina Bay Sands (MBS).

Forty-five exhibitors, most of them overseas galleries, were left scrambling for space after having invested five-figure sums in booths at Art Stage Singapore. Though several found alternative venues, including a pop-up at MBS, because local galleries, corporate entities and art watchers stepped in, the country's ambition to become a visual arts hub and bigger player in the contemporary art market has suffered a setback.

Gallery owners have written to The Straits Times, wanting answers from the agencies that backed Art Stage Singapore: the National Arts Council (NAC), Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and Economic Development Board (EDB).

Hong Kong-based Wellington Gallery and Taiwan-based galleries Rich Art and Ching Yuan International Art Company said in a joint media statement written in Chinese: "If not handled appropriately, this will have a severe impact on both the global reputation and robustness of the Singapore art industry. We hope Singapore's Government will be able to draw lessons from this episode, help us find redress, and take up the responsibility it should assume."

The NAC, EDB and STB also support the incoming ART SG and also a new fair, S.E.A Focus – run by local curators. It was held at the same time as Art Stage Singapore would have been, but in the Gillman

Barracks art gallery enclave.

However, in a letter to art collectors, Mr Rudolf pointed the finger at the local fair. He blamed S.E.A. Focus for providing "unequal competition" to his event. Some of the participants in S.E.A. Focus had taken booth space at previous editions of Art Stage Singapore, and Mr Rudolf said his fair had "no chance to (financially) compete and survive this unequal competition and cannibalism".

In reply, the NAC, STB and EDB said in a joint statement on Jan 17: "The Singapore Government has and will always welcome ideas and programmes including art fairs from all organisers, with an aim to add vibrancy to Singapore's visual arts landscape."

This week, the agencies also responded to letters published in the ST Forum demanding better oversight of the visual arts scene after the exit of Art Stage Singapore. The joint statement sent to the ST Forum on Jan 29 said: "Singapore has thrived as an open economy which welcomes the global inflow of talents and ideas so as to constantly innovate and improve. If we are too risk-averse and only seek a guarantee of success, we will miss out on opportunities and new possibilities."

But the situation begs the question: Will Singapore's drive to be an arts hub be sped up by bringing in overseas experts, or should it look to local talent to develop the scene on its own?

### S'PORE'S CHANGING ART MARKET

Ironically, Art Stage Singapore's debut edition in 2011 edged out one of Asia's longest-running art fairs, ARTS Singapore. This was a home-grown effort started by members of the Art Galleries Association (Singapore) in 2000.

Credited for kick-starting the art fair scene in Singapore, ARTS Singapore was, towards the end, caught between the new Affordable Art Fair, targeting first-time buyers with prices below \$10,000, and the incoming Art Stage Singapore, targeting elite collectors with million-dollar works. In its last edition in 2010, ARTS Singapore was a boutique fair of 50 galleries, compared with over 100 participating galleries in 2008 and 2009. It "took a break" in 2011 and never returned.

As in any industry, the art market has its boom years and also recessions. Galleries say the Singapore market is challenging, with a small pool of local collectors.



In Mr Rudolf's letter explaining the fair's cancellation, he said he had brought in 500 galleries to Art Stage Singapore over eight editions, but 450 had refused to return "due to a lack of local sales". (Art Stage Singapore had 84 exhibitors last year, compared with 131 in 2017 and 170 in 2016.)

Several other contemporary art fairs have found sales in Singapore lower than expected: Singapore Art Fair and Milan Image Art & Design Fair Singapore made high-profile debuts in 2014, then exited, as did the Singapore Contemporary Art Show, which debuted in 2016 and exited after only two editions.

However, the Affordable Art Fair continues annually in Singapore, as does the Art Apart Fair, which promotes emerging artists and, this year, had its 11th edition in a black-and-white bungalow.

Art fair directors are supposed to gauge the market and pitch their events accordingly, and also to bring in new collectors. This is where Art Stage Singapore seems to have failed – and it is a dramatic failure.

Mr Rudolf, as a big name in the art market world, had been courted by the Government for over a decade to start a visual arts fair in Singapore. He was said to have transformed Swiss art fair Art Basel from a quiet trade fair into a glamorous art event during his time at the helm from 1991 to 2000. At the end of his term, Art Basel had a waiting list of around 700 galleries

and set the gold standard for how collectors were to be wined and dined at parties featuring movie celebrities and pop stars.

Art Stage Singapore clearly aimed to be the regional Art Basel. From 2011 to 2015, it notched up million-dollar sales, attracted between 30,000 and 51,000 visitors each edition, and showcased between 120 and 160 galleries a year.

Yet there were ripples beneath this surface success. Art Stage Singapore was not developing a market for local gallerists as they would have liked, which was by bringing in new collectors and sharing its existing database of art buyers.

In 2012, Mr Rudolf raised the hackles of fair participants by taking key collectors on a gallery tour of Indonesia, while Art Stage Singapore was still going on. As well, a prominent regional gallery owner accused Mr Rudolf's wife Maria Elena, who handles VIP relations, of tearing out a page from the gallery's guestbook to remove the names and contacts of visiting collectors.

The next year, Art Stage Singapore brought in an Indonesian Pavilion showcasing artists from the region. The pavilion was twice the size of the Singapore Pavilion, causing concern that local artists were being overlooked. Art Stage Singapore also broke an unwritten rule by acting as an agent for those Indonesian artists without gallery representation. Fair organisers normally do not take a

booth at their own event, since that would compete with other galleries that have paid for space.

In 2016, Mr Rudolf set up another art fair, Art Stage Jakarta, held in Indonesia in August and clearly competing with Singapore for the same collectors. It seemed that he was doing what was best for his brand – like any businessman – rather than making the growth of the Singapore art scene and art market his primary focus.

In recent years, fewer Singapore-based galleries took booths at Art Stage Singapore. Owners expressed doubts over whether the fair would attract collectors beyond those already in their databases, or generate sales.

### SPRINGBOARD TO ART WEEK

That said, Art Stage Singapore provided an anchor event for the NAC, EDB and STB to start an annual celebration of visual arts, titled Singapore Art Week, in 2013. Last year's Singapore Art Week drew 590,000 viewers, according to the NAC, and this year, the event – which ran from Jan 19 to 27 – had over 100 exhibitions and arts events, mostly home-grown.

Among these events was the debut of S.E.A. Focus, essentially a boutique art fair in a tent, curated by local player STPI - Creative Workshop & Gallery. When S.E.A. Focus was announced last year, STPI executive director Emi Eu said local galleries had doubts about whether Art Stage Singapore

would continue to be held in the long run and wanted their own platform during Singapore Art Week.

Its sales figures have not been released but gallerists who spoke to The Straits Times expressed satisfaction over a promising first outing.

Art fairs are important to artists and galleries because the fairs bring in viewers who may become collectors. However, any Singapore fair has its job cut out trying to lure serious collectors away from other major fairs in Asia. Well-heeled collectors from the Philippines or Indonesia tend to patronise fairs in their own countries, such as Art Fair Philippines and Art Jog. Other Asian collectors tend to flock to Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Central, whose founders are setting their sights on Singapore with ART SG this November.

One of the ART SG founders, Mr Magnus Renfrew, is also behind the new Taipei Dangdai fair, which debuted in Taiwan this month – still more competition for Singapore.

However, art fairs are not the only way to judge a healthy art ecosystem. Singapore has the National Gallery, which has brought in a ground-breaking exhibition of minimalist art, looking at the genre through a South-east Asian lens. At Singapore Art Week this year, there were about 10 platforms for curators, museum directors and collectors to meet and discuss the visual arts industry. Singapore is seen as the place for discourse about South-east Asian art and this is a strength the country can leverage.

The art gallery enclave at Gillman Barracks alone has tremendous potential to boost art appreciation – and buying – through innovative artistic collaborations. Some ground-up initiatives include the NAC-supported Disini visual arts festival last year, which featured pop-up sculptures around Gillman Barracks, including a giant pink pineapple that went viral on social media.

Disini's curator Khairuddin Hori of Chan + Hori Contemporary said the festival was not about selling art or creating a spectacle, but to lay "sturdy foundations" to inspire stakeholders to "come together and offer great art and art-related programmes for the public".

Another barracks-wide programme is Art After Dark, supported by NAC. This is a regular one-night party where galleries at Gillman Barracks stay open from 7pm till late. The event draws up to 9,000 visitors. At least one tenant, Mizuma Gallery, aims to convert these visitors to art buyers by adding lifestyle-themed offerings to clinch the deal, namely clothes and jewellery based on visual art created by the gallery's artists.

With such innovative local ideas stimulating interest in viewing art, surely interest in buying artwork cannot be far behind. Galleries, curators and artists who are based here are invested in making the art market profitable for their own sake. They deserve support and room to grow. It is to be hoped that the new art fair coming in November offers them this space, rather than edging them out in favour of its own brand.

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SEE FORUM B11





Professor Wang Gungwu speaking at the Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference on Monday. Also on the panel were former foreign minister George Yeo (left) and Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh. Prof Wang says mere regular meetings between Asean and its partner states may not be enough if either China or the US insists that Asean has to decide which side it supports. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

# The tension between north and south in China's history

This is an edited excerpt of a speech by Professor Wang Gungwu at the Institute of Policy Studies' Singapore Perspectives 2019 conference on Monday. Prof Wang chairs the board of trustees at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.

Singapore's place in the world depends so much on its place in the region. It's a region that is gaining in importance, in part because there has been a general shift and recognition that it is in the heart of a new dynamic economic region called the Indo-Pacific region.

This is of course nothing new. The Indo-Pacific has always been there, two oceans, in which Singapore's region has been at the heart of it.

In the days when the region's major players were on the Indian Ocean side, centred on India, on the Western Pacific side, centred on China, this region we now call South-east Asia (it didn't have a name before) was central to that region for thousands of years.

That is not new; in other words, there's something very fundamental about the regional position of Singapore in the region and the region in the larger old world of the Eurasian continent land mass. It is in that context that I want to talk about Singapore's region.

Today, we have a global power – the United States – and a regional power – China. Between a global power and a regional power, we have enough expertise to look at the broader global scene. China at the moment is the focus of attention and I think it is right for us to spend a bit more time on that.

China has been a dominant power in this region from very early on. So how China sees the region seems something that we need to look at very closely.

The original China was far away from this region, namely in the Yellow River delta, and was there for hundreds of years before it looked south, and for a long time its perception of the south was simply of the "Hundred Yue", the southern south-western peoples of the south-west but they had very little to do with each other for a long time.

It was not until about 2,000 years ago that that part of China began to move south and took over some parts of what is now south-eastern China or what we normally call South China, and China began to emerge on the edge of the South China Sea, and that was only 2,000 years ago.

But by that time, the people in South-east Asia had already formulated its own identity and personality relating to the western part of the region in the Indian Ocean, and of course had its very deep commercial links already with

the Western Pacific, including of course the southern coast of China. That's the background.

China moved south largely because the north was being invaded again and again by various tribal peoples from the north, north-eastern, north-western part of the land mass of Eurasia, forcing the people of China originally in the Yellow River area to move south – and they came down gradually over the centuries until southern China became also China in the south.

In that context, China had moved southwards to what is now called South China. But it was not until the 10th century that there was such a thing as China in the south. By that time the north had been basically taken over by northern peoples from the steppes of the northern Central Asian land mass.

The Han Chinese moved more and more to the south and intermingled with the original indigenous inhabitants of the Yue people in the south to form a new kind of society.

And because they were isolated and there were divisions, the south was mainly defending itself from being conquered from the north for a long time, for about 200 years, during which time a little kingdom – today we would normally associate it with the Song empire but actually it was a Song kingdom. The southern Song for about 150 years was all that was left of the original China because much of north China had already been taken over by other peoples.

But even then the story did not end. What was intriguing is that China was eventually integrated into one China again, from the north by the Mongols. We often forget the Mongols were active everywhere. We noticed that they spread right across into Europe and the Middle East and the Mediterranean, but of course its most important and most successful empire was under Kublai Khan in Yuan China.

But what is significant about Yuan China, Mongol China was that it integrated all of China again for the first time in hundreds of years and by that integration it pulled the southern Chinese back into the northern ambit, so to speak.

The north became the dominant feature of China's history for the next 600 or 700 years.

## SOUTH CHINA'S TRADING LINKS WITH THE REGION

Where Singapore is concerned, it's probably not entirely a coincidence

that we first heard of Temasek at a time when the Mongol empire was at its peak in China.

It was when Kublai Khan in fact had conquered all of China that we first heard of the island called Temasek. Mongol power drew the southern Chinese back into the northern ambit and from that time onwards to the 19th century, the southern peoples in China, in the China of the south, were struggling to keep up their economic and other relations with the region in the south – that is South-east Asia – by trading, often against imperial edicts.

Nevertheless, the trading went on, actively involving numerous peoples – the Arabs, the Indians, the South-east Asians and eventually the Europeans, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British and, eventually, the French and the Americans. So that was a period where the south in China, China's south, was deeply involved in the commercial relations of South-east Asia and the rest of the region.

And that was a time, however, where the political authority, the centre was always up in the north and the south was constrained by the north not to be too active.

That remained so until the 19th century at the cost of China's own independence and it lost, in fact, lost control of its own civilisational progress by the end of the 19th century.

## THE TWO REVOLUTIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

And in the 20th century, we saw two revolutions that totally transformed that China. But that transformation itself deserves our special attention because those two revolutions changed the nature, the structure of Chinese society in some very profound ways.

For one thing, what South China represented, for all those centuries of northern dominance, was a group of people who were primarily entrepreneurial, commercial, technically oriented, who were very enterprising and trying to create a new economic environment for themselves; while at the same time being politically dominated by the forces in the north.

But this tension between northern political and military power and southern entrepreneurial and technical expertise remained throughout that whole period down to the end of the 19th century.

But the 19th century, the opening of China gave the southern Chinese, the southern Chinese entrepreneurs in particular, but also their technical and scientific talents down in the south, an opportunity to rise above their positions, the low positions that they were allocated through the centuries.

That fundamental transformation in Chinese society has now created a new China and the two revolutions that occurred, the ones in 1911 and 1949, totally transformed their structure.

It was a structure in which the literati together with the military and the peasantry formed the basis of that society. But after the two revolutions, the technologists, scientists and entrepreneurs rose in their positions in the society, became invaluable to the economic development and progress of the country.

And the literati took another form in the form of the party, a new concept, a new kind of organisation drawn from the Western experience and Western political structures, a party in which a new literati together with the military formed the ruling elite. But balancing that was an emerging power of the scientific, technological and enterprising entrepreneurial sections of society forming a balance in the structure.

This is new to China. It really took shape under the reforms of Deng Xiaoping. When Deng reformed China, he basically created a new balance in which the party elite and military are balanced by the scientific, technological entrepreneurs of southern origins.

That balance remains I think, when we look today at China's relations with our region in the south.

South-east Asia, of course, also underwent fantastic changes. After the imperial period, the period of decolonisation, (we have) a group of sovereign states that are now united together in their effort to defend the region against the rivalries of major powers outside the region – a task still very much a work in progress.

In that context, let me just look at China's position vis-a-vis the region in which Singapore is at the heart of.

China's south is more open than ever before and Beijing's leaders remain in strict control, but they have discovered new ways to move forward. This has led to one of the

country's biggest ideas, the One Belt, One Road initiative that seeks to create more opportunities for future economic growth.

Its key feature is that it covers both the overland and maritime potentials across the whole stretch of the old Eurasian world, where a balanced approach is essential to advance China's long-term interests. The overland Silk Road and the growing dependence on access to maritime ports are two sides of the same vision whereby China safeguards its national goals in both directions at the same time.

Nevertheless, the distinction between the overland belt and the maritime road is important and the Chinese expect that the challenges facing each half would be different.

The overland Belt across Eurasia to reach markets in Europe has not been attractive for centuries. What distinguishes China's new approach is that this Belt is also reaching southwards to the Indian Ocean. Here, geopolitical advantage is obviously more important and that has induced neighbouring states to join the organisation with that in mind.

China's south, the maritime "Silk Road" is a different story. It is now central to future economic development. Keeping the waters secure for China's maritime linkages has never been so vital.

For the first time in its history, the south is an existential problem for its national interests. There are at least three dimensions to their changing condition.

First, the dynamism in globalisation depends a great deal on entrepreneurs and inventive industrialists who are always more active and better appreciated in southern China. Chinese northern leaders claim to understand the need to give them fuller rein to devise the best methods for the initiative to grow, but they are still too prone to impose tight controls on the slightest provocation.

Second, the countries to China's south are now sovereign states in an overarching international system and have organised themselves to protect the region. This is not to say that Asean is united in everything. It is obvious that its members are seeking unity in several key areas. But the association has come a long way and its members understand how important it is for them to do things together and not allow outside forces to create dangerous and unnecessary divisions.

Third, the South China Sea has become a source of tension between the United States and China. The subject now involves countries not bordering the South China Sea, including United States allies like Japan and Australia and some countries of the European Union.

As a focal point in the US reaction to China's rise, Asean members know that it is more crucial than ever to be united. When the Americans redefined their strategic concerns by moving the goal posts from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific, the decision made South-east Asia more central to the competing powers. No one is certain how the threats to peace and prosperity can be eliminated. Mere regular meetings between Asean and its partner states may not be enough if either China or the United States insists that Asean has to decide which side it supports.

China's entrepreneurial classes have to face these factors confronting the Silk Road in China's south. They know the region and are unlikely to take the unity of Asean for granted.

They also have to ensure that their northern leaders understand the demands of coastal and maritime outreach as well as the different demands of the economies across Asean's land borders.

The proposals to connect China's southern provinces to the South China Sea and as well as the Bay of Bengal through Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, point to the importance of the land-sea dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative and the measures needed to ensure that both parts of the initiative support each other. Furthermore, there are now millions of settlers of Chinese descent in South-east Asia who are loyal to their respective nation-states.

Most people in south China are able to relate to these communities and know how to deal with them with care. But those responsible among the central elites, especially those of northern origins, have not found these localised communities easy to understand.

If China hopes that these nationals of Chinese descent would play a positive role in their countries' relations with China, it would have to exercise sensitivity to their local interests as well as the interests of the countries where they have made their homes.



# Data breaches dent S'pore's image as tech innovator

Mike Ives

HONG KONG • Singapore takes pride in being a technology hub where municipal decisions are driven by cutting-edge data science.

"Data is the new currency, and with open data, the possibilities are endless!" the Government says on its Smart Nation portal. But that image has been dented by two embarrassing data breaches.

Last year, a cyber attack on Singapore's public health system compromised data from 1.5 million people. And on Monday, the Health Ministry said medical records of 14,200 HIV-positive people in the city-state had been obtained by an American whose Singaporean partner worked at the ministry. The ministry said it learnt on Jan 22 that the records had been illegally disclosed online.

Experts say the breaches highlight the potential pitfalls for Singapore and other countries that are pushing to make vast troves of data more accessible and centralised.

Do the public benefits justify the inherent risks to privacy? And can anyone prevent senior officials from misusing information they have at their fingertips?

In addition, the HIV records breach illuminates the widespread stigma and discrimination that people with the virus face in Singapore, a conservative society where gay sex – which accounts for roughly half of new HIV infections in the country – is banned under a colonial-era law.

"Why are people so concerned about their status being known?" said Mr Eamonn Murphy, Asia-Pacific director at United Nations agency UNAids. "It's the issue of stigma and discrimination, and it's familial, for some of them, but clearly workplace: fear of loss of employment."

"That's a bigger issue that the ministry or the Government of

Singapore should be trying to address," he added.

The authorities say the perpetrator in the cyber attack last year targeted the medical records of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, a cancer survivor. Mr S. Iswaran, Minister for Communications and Information, told lawmakers this month that the attacker could not be identified because of national security concerns.

He also said copied personal data had not "emerged in any form" on the Dark Web, a part of the Internet that relies on encryption and is often used for criminal activities.

In the second episode, the Health Ministry said it learnt in 2016 that a foreigner might have been in possession of confidential information from the HIV registry. The records included names, identification numbers, contact details, HIV test results and related medical information for 5,400 Singaporeans whose infections were diagnosed as recently as January 2013, and 8,800 foreigners diagnosed up to December 2011.

The suspect, Mikhy Farrera Brochez, is an American who reportedly tested positive for HIV in 2008 using a fake passport from the Bahamas, shortly after arriving in Singapore.

Foreigners with HIV, the virus that causes Aids, are not allowed to work in Singapore. To get around that, prosecutors said, Brochez's partner, Ler Teck Siang – a Singaporean doctor who worked at the Health Ministry – twice submitted his own blood sample when the Singapore authorities tested Brochez for HIV.

"This incident is believed to have arisen from the mishandling of information by Ler, who is suspected of not having complied with the policies and guidelines on the handling of confidential information," the Health Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Dr Desmond Wai, a gastroenterologist at Mount



Last year, a cyber attack on SingHealth's database compromised data from 1.5 million patients. This week, the Health Ministry said medical records of 14,200 HIV-positive people had been leaked online. ST FILE PHOTO

Elizabeth Novena Specialist Centre in Singapore, said the cyber attack last year illustrated how the country's electronic records are vulnerable to hacking, no matter how secure they may appear.

"There is a Chinese saying, 'If the good is one-foot tall, the evil will be three-feet tall'," he said. "So I think there's always a risk."

Dr Wai said that, for the most part, it was not fair to blame the Health Ministry for the second breach, because it would be hard to prevent a senior official from gaining access to the Government's HIV registry.

But he added that Ler, the former head of the ministry's National Public Health Unit, should not have had such wide access to national

HIV records in the first place, nor an ability to download them.

Mr Tom Uren, a cyber policy analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra, said the leak of Singapore's HIV records highlighted a common challenge that many governments face: trying to improve overall health services and efficiency while also protecting individuals' privacy.

While Singapore's HIV registry was clearly raided by a "bad apple", he added, the leak points to potential problems with oversight of the record-keeping system – and with the storage of HIV test results alongside so much personal information.

"There's actually no need for all that data to be held

together," Mr Uren said.

Brochez was convicted in 2017 of numerous offences, including lying to labour officials about his HIV status, providing false information to police and using forged degree certificates in job applications, the ministry said. He was sentenced to 28 months in prison, and later deported. The ministry said he is currently outside Singapore, but it did not specify where.

His partner, Ler, was sentenced last year to 24 months in prison for abetting cheating and providing false information to the police and Health Ministry. Ler, who is appealing against that conviction, has also been charged with mishandling confidential

information related to HIV-positive patients.

On Monday, the Health Ministry apologised for "the anxiety and distress caused by this incident" and said it had been contacting those affected by the breach. The ministry also said it would "continue to regularly review our systems to ensure that they remain secure and that the necessary safeguards are in place".

As of late Tuesday evening, the ministry had not responded to questions from The New York Times about how the two data breaches occurred.

Advocacy groups say the disclosure of so many records has sent chills through HIV-positive people in Singapore who were already battling a widespread stigma.

About half of the roughly 450 new cases of HIV infection reported in Singapore each year are transmitted through same-sex intercourse, according to the Health Ministry's data. But experts say a major barrier to prevention is that few gay and bisexual men in Singapore are open about their sexual orientation.

"Fear is what drives people underground and makes them come too late to health services," said Mr Murphy of UNAids. "One, it doesn't help them for their own personal health outcome, and two, it doesn't help prevent further transmissions of disease. This is why it's so critical to have a protective environment."

Professor Roy Chan, an expert on HIV at the National University of Singapore and president of advocacy group Action for Aids Singapore, said in a statement that the group was "deeply troubled" by the data leak. He said it was a criminal act that should be "condemned and answered in the most severe terms possible".

Mr Paerin Choa, a spokesman for Pink Dot SG, a group that advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Singapore, said victims of the leak now faced "the prospect of further stigmatisation and discrimination, thanks to the fear and ignorance surrounding HIV and people living with HIV".

He said people had no legal protection from discrimination in the workplace based on their HIV status, sexual orientation or gender identity, and that the practice of deporting immigrants who test positive for the virus was unnecessarily cruel.

He added that the Government should "take moral and political responsibility by acknowledging what HIV-positive individuals have to endure in our country, and take concrete action to enact anti-discrimination legislation to support" them. "This would reduce harm done to those whose names have been exposed." NTIMES

# Blind reverence for science obscures real problems

Aaron Hanlon

When Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recently pointed out that algorithms can be racist, she drew criticism from Mr Ryan Saavedra, a writer for conservative website The Daily Wire.

Mr Saavedra mocked her, arguing that she was suggesting maths, which drives algorithmic calculations, is racist. In practice, algorithms absolutely can produce racist outcomes, regardless of the maths that empowers them. And yet, as this example shows, it's all too easy to assume the truth and authority of something dressed up in the clothing of scientific objectivity.

That mistake is only intensified when we stop thinking critically and rely solely on mathematical and scientific authority to understand our world and our humanity. Nevertheless, this very error has led to academic controversies every bit as telling as the political ones.

In October, an independent scholar, an online magazine editor and a philosophy professor set out to show that academic journals would accept nonsense so long as it flattered a "social justice" bias. To that end, they sprang a hoax on a bunch of unsuspecting academic journals, fuelling public criticism of academia, especially the humanities.

Dr James Lindsay, Ms Helen Pluckrose and Dr Peter Boghossian wrote 20 intentionally absurd articles, some of which included made-up data, and submitted them to journals in interdisciplinary gender and race studies fields. They ultimately scored seven acceptances out of 48 submissions to 29 journals.

The conversation around the stunt has mostly focused on the hoaxers' accusations of liberal bias.

Ultimately, though, another element of their stunt is more revealing: Five of their 20 hoax submissions featured fabricated data, leading to an acceptance rate of about 60 per cent for papers with faked data and 25 per cent for papers without. By aiming to deceive academics with fake data dressed up as empirical study results – and not just jargon-y nonsense – the hoaxers undermined both their own claim that political bias drives bad scholarship and the wider public perception that political bias drives research outside the sciences. Instead, they arguably revealed that we're far too deferential to the mere idea of science.

Much of the public squabbling among the humanities, sciences and social sciences – or what Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker calls "the intellectual war on science" – comes down to a basic misunderstanding known as scientism. Scientism is the untenable extension of scientific authority into realms of knowledge that lie outside the scope of what science can justifiably determine. It's the idea that every aspect of our lives is better explained by science than by any other form of inquiry.

For example, science produces the knowledge required to develop artificial intelligence software that can replace human judges in the courtroom, and measuring and modelling the performance of AI judges can give us useful facts. But the question of whether AI judges should replace human judges is a complex civic and moral question, one that is by definition informed but not conclusively answerable by scientific facts.

It's here that observations like Ms Ocasio-Cortez's become so important: If racist assumptions are baked into our supposedly objective tools, there's nothing anti-scientific about pointing that

out. But scientism threatens to blind us to such realisations – and critics such as Dr Lindsay, Ms Pluckrose and Dr Boghossian suggest that keeping our eyes open is some sort of intellectual failing.

The influence of scientism on our economic and policy choices has begun to shift the border between the sciences and the humanities, such that efforts to explain aspects of our lives through any other means but science are now dismissed.

The hoaxers embrace this stance, writing: "Something has gone wrong in the university – especially in certain fields within the humanities... This worldview is not scientific, and it is not rigorous."

**If the hoax shows anything, it's that uncritical reverence for ideas clad in scientific clothing – or a desire to be "scientific" to defuse the pressures of scientism – is at least as much a problem as progressive political bias in gender and race studies fields.**

To be clear, the scope of scientific authority should expand as scientific knowledge does, but that doesn't mean questions that can't be answered by scientific facts alone should be subjected to scientific authority alone. To do so would mean not only excluding better explanations for lived reality, but also undermining science itself by setting it up for failure.

Most of us intuitively understand the difference between biological sex and cultural notions of gender, for example. We know that our biology is a matter of science, even when biological sex isn't binary, but that cultural explanations, such as historical gender roles, advertising or institutional habits and norms all help explain why, for example, we associate pink with girls and blue with boys.

Scientism, however, encourages us to ignore these cultural, historical and institutional explanations, dismissing them as anti-scientific, even when they don't actually contravene scientific fact. For example, the claim "science says gender is not a social construct" rightly identifies ways that biology organises aspects of gender, but it doesn't mean that gender is binary, or that there are no social aspects of gender, like gender roles and fashions, which change over time and across societies. These can be usefully explained and better understood by situating them in cultural and historical context, and not simply by reducing them to biology. Scientism is destructive because the humanities and sciences should be able to build knowledge together, offering compatible explanations.

So what does the latest hoax tell us about the extension of scientism into academic fields that aren't reducible to purely scientific explanations?

Part of the answer lies in a prior

hoax, perpetrated by New York University physicist Alan Sokal in 1996. Professor Sokal got an article laden with nonsensical jargon and specious arguments accepted at Social Text, a leading (though not peer-reviewed) cultural theory journal. The infamous "Sokal Hoax" was instructive, too, because, as Social Text editors Bruce Robbins and Andrew Ross explained after Prof Sokal went public about his actions, they didn't accept his article out of fealty to its politics or its jargon, but rather out of trust in – perhaps even reverence for – an eminent scientist's engagement with cultural theory.

Remember that the more recent hoaxers didn't just content themselves with verbal nonsense (as Prof Sokal did); they also faked data, and not in a way that reviewers should necessarily dismiss without a good reason to do so. Columbia University sociologist Musa al-Gharbi found that the hoaxers' "purported empirical studies (with faked data) were more than twice as likely to be accepted for publication as their non-empirical papers", which lends support to this possibility.

It's entirely possible that reviewers took these submissions seriously out of respect for scientific conclusions, not out of anti-science bias. This would also align with broader research showing that political ideology is not actually what causes people to distrust science.

Indeed, one of the liabilities of interdisciplinary gender studies journals like those that fell for the hoax is that, as I've argued, they're actually not humanities journals, nor are they strictly social science journals.

As such, they conceivably receive submissions that make any combination of interpretive claims, claims of cultural observation, and empirical or data-based claims. For

all of their potential benefits, these interdisciplinary efforts – which have analogues in the humanities as well – also run into methodological and epistemological challenges precisely because of their reverence for science and scientific methods, not because of anti-science attitudes.

In the end, the hoaxers' own conflation of interpretive and factual claims undermined their accusations of political bias and anti-science attitudes among gender studies researchers. Remember that their papers with invented statistics were accepted at more than twice the rate of those without them. When faking data is the most effective way of tricking academics into accepting nonsense articles, scholars in humanistic and interdisciplinary social science fields are indeed at fault.

But the nature of this fault is not quite what the hoaxers claim. If the hoax shows anything, it's that uncritical reverence for ideas clad in scientific clothing – or a desire to be "scientific" to defuse the pressures of scientism – is at least as much a problem as progressive political bias in gender and race studies fields.

In actual fact, "social justice" jargon wasn't enough – as the hoaxers initially thought – to deceive, but sprinkling in fake data did the trick better than jargon or political pieties ever could.

Like Ms Ocasio-Cortez's critics, who trust too easily in the appearance of scientific objectivity, the hoaxed journals were more likely to buy outrageous claims if they were backed by something that looked like scientific data.

It's not that the hoax was an utter failure, nor that we shouldn't worry about the vulnerabilities it exposed. It's that, ironically, scientism and misplaced scientific authority actually contribute to those vulnerabilities and undermine science in the process.

WASHINGTON POST

• Aaron Hanlon is an assistant professor of English at Colby College.





A demonstration using artificial intelligence and facial recognition in dense crowd spatial-temporal technology at CES 2019 in Las Vegas earlier this month. The writer says deep learning, deep surveillance, deep facial recognition, deep voice recognition and deep automation offer unprecedented promise and some unprecedented peril. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

# DeepMind, deep AI, deepfakes: A warning on ‘surveillance capitalism’

Thomas L. Friedman.

Around the end of each year, major dictionaries declare their “word of the year”. Last year, for instance, the most looked-up word at Merriam-Webster.com was “justice”. Well, even though it’s early, I’m ready to declare the word of the year for 2019.

The word is “deep”. Why? Because recent advances in the speed and scope of digitisation, connectivity, big data and artificial intelligence are now taking us “deep” into places and into powers that we’ve never experienced before – and that governments have never had to regulate before. I’m talking about deep learning, deep insights, deep surveillance, deep facial recognition, deep voice recognition, deep automation and deep artificial minds.

Some of these technologies offer unprecedented promise and some unprecedented peril – but they’re all now part of our lives. Everything is going deep.

Which is why it may not be an accident that one of the biggest hit songs today is Shallow, from the movie A Star Is Born. The main refrain, sung by Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper, is: “I’m off the deep end, watch as I dive in... We’re far from the shallow now.”

We sure are. But the lifeguard is still on the beach and – here’s what’s really scary – he doesn’t know how to swim! More about that later. For now, how did we get so deep down where the sharks live?

The short answer: Technology moves up in steps, and each step, each new platform, is usually biased towards a new set of capabilities. Around the year 2000, we took a huge step up that was biased towards connectivity, because of the explosion of fibre-optic cable, wireless and satellites.

Suddenly connectivity became so fast, cheap, easy for you and ubiquitous that it felt like you could touch someone whom you could never touch before and that you could be touched by someone who could never touch you before.

Around 2007, we took another big step up. The iPhone, sensors, digitisation, big data, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and cloud computing melded together and created a new platform that was biased towards abstracting complexity at a speed, scope and scale we’d never experienced before.

So many complex things became simplified. Complexity became so fast, free, easy to use and invisible that soon, with one touch on Uber’s app, you could page a taxi, direct a

taxi, pay a taxi, rate a taxi driver and be rated by a taxi driver.

Over the last decade, these advances in the speed of connectivity and the elimination of complexity have grown exponentially. Because as big data got really big, as broadband got really fast, as algorithms got really smart, as 5G got actually deployed, artificial intelligence got really intelligent. So now, with no touch but just a voice command or machines acting autonomously – we can go so much deeper in so many areas.

Scientists and doctors can now find the needle in the haystack of health data as the norm, not the exception, and therefore see certain disease patterns that were never apparent before. Machines can recognise your face so accurately that the Chinese government can punish you for jaywalking in Beijing, using street cameras, and you will never encounter a police officer.

Indeed, with today’s facial recognition technology, I can dispense with the card reader at my office’s security gate and instead use each employee’s face as an ID. And cars can drive on their own.

DeepMind, the artificial intelligence arm of Google’s parent, developed an AI program, AlphaGo, that has now defeated the world’s top human players of the ancient strategy game Go – which is much more complex than chess – by learning from human play.

As The Times reported, DeepMind “showed yet another way that computers could be developed to perform better than humans in highly complex tasks” and to “mimic the way the brain functions”. DeepMind’s next breakthrough, AlphaZero, did not even need to learn from humans. It learnt even faster by repeatedly playing against itself!

Today “virtual agents” – using conversational interfaces powered by artificial intelligence – can increasingly understand your intent when you call the bank, credit card company or insurance company for service, just by hearing your voice.

It means machines can answer so many more questions than non-machines, also known as “humans”. The percentage of calls a chatbot, or virtual agent, is able to handle without turning the caller over to a person is called its “containment rate”, and these rates are steadily soaring. Soon, automated systems will be so humanlike that they will have to self-identify as machines.

Automation is also going deep, fast. The Times’ Kevin Roose quoted Mr Mohit Joshi, president of Infosys, a technology firm that

helps other businesses automate their operations, as saying in Davos last week: “People are looking to achieve very big numbers. Earlier they had incremental, 5 to 10 per cent goals in reducing their workforce. Now they’re saying, ‘Why can’t we do it with 1 per cent of the people we have?’”

But bad guys, who are always early adopters, also see the same potential to go deep in wholly new ways. They can fake your face and voice so well that they can create a YouTube video that will go viral of you saying racist things or make it look like the president of the United States just announced a nuclear attack on Russia. They can use technology to fake a bank manager’s voice so well that it can call your grandmother, and, with a voice command, ask her to transfer \$10,000 to an account in Switzerland and she’ll do it – and you’ll never catch them in time.

That’s why the adjective that so many people are affixing to all of these new capabilities to convey their awesome power is “deep”.

On Jan 20, The London Observer looked at Harvard Business School professor Shoshana Zuboff’s new

**Over the last decade, these advances in the speed of connectivity and the elimination of complexity have grown exponentially. Because as big data got really big, as broadband got really fast, as algorithms got really smart, as 5G got actually deployed, artificial intelligence got really intelligent. So now, with no touch but just a voice command or machines acting autonomously – we can go so much deeper in so many areas.**

book, the title of which perfectly describes the deep dark waters we’ve entered: The Age Of Surveillance Capitalism.

“Surveillance capitalism,” Prof Zuboff wrote, “unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioural data. Although some of these data are applied to service improvement, the rest are declared as a proprietary behavioural surplus, fed into advanced manufacturing processes known as ‘machine intelligence’, and fabricated into prediction products that anticipate what you will do now, soon and later. Finally, these prediction products are traded in a new kind of marketplace that I call behavioural futures markets. Surveillance capitalists have grown immensely wealthy from these trading operations, for many companies are willing to lay bets on our future behaviour.”

Unfortunately, we have not developed the regulations or governance, or scaled the ethics, to manage a world of such deep powers, deep interactions and deep potential abuses.

Two quotes tell that story: Last April, Senator Orrin Hatch was questioning Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg during a joint hearing of the commerce and judiciary committees. At one point, Mr Hatch asked Mr Zuckerberg: “So, how do you sustain a business model in which users don’t pay for your service?”

Mr Zuckerberg, clearly trying to stifle a laugh, replied: “Senator, we run ads.” Mr Hatch did not seem to understand that Facebook’s business model is to mine users’ data and then run targeted ads – and he was one of Facebook’s regulators.

But then Mr Zuckerberg was also clueless about how deep the powers of the Facebook platform had gone – deep enough that a few smart Russian hackers could manipulate it to help Mr Donald Trump win the presidency.

When faced with evidence that fake news spread on Facebook influenced the outcome of the 2016 election, Mr Zuckerberg dismissed that notion as a “pretty crazy idea”. It turns out that it was happening at an industrial scale, and he later had to apologise.

Regulations often lag behind new technologies, but when they move this fast and cut this deep, that lag can be really dangerous. I wish I thought that catch-up was around the corner. I don’t. Our national discussion has never been more shallow – reduced to 280 characters.

This has created an opening and burgeoning demand for political, social and religious leaders, government institutions and businesses that can go deep – that can validate what is real and offer the public deep truths, deep privacy protections and deep trust.

But deep trust and deep loyalty cannot be forged overnight. They take time. That’s one reason this old newspaper I work for – The Gray Lady – is doing so well today. Not all, but many people, are desperate for trusted navigators.

Many will also look for that attribute in our next president, because they sense that deep changes are afoot. It is unsettling, and yet, there’s no swimming back. We are, indeed, far from the shallow now. NYTIMES

## The challenge of one world, two systems

Martin Wolf

The accelerating breakdown in relations between China and the United States is the most significant current event. How is this to be managed, given today’s global interdependence?

Three recent pieces of evidence reveal alarm over the rise of China to its current status as the world’s “junior superpower”, in the words of Professor Yan Xuetong of Tsinghua University.

One is the campaign against Huawei, standard bearer for Chinese technological ambitions, which must be viewed in the context of the US trade war with China and its description of the latter as a “strategic competitor”.

Another is a paper from the free trade-oriented BDI, Germany’s leading industry association, which labels China a “partner and systemic competitor”.

The last is the description of President Xi Jinping’s China by Mr George Soros as “the most dangerous opponent of those who believe in the concept of open society”.

This, then, is a point on which a nationalist US administration, German free-traders and a noteworthy proponent of liberal ideas agree: China is no friend. At best, it is an uncomfortable partner; at worst, it is a hostile power.

Should we conclude that a new “Cold War” has begun? The answer is: yes and no. Yes, because so many Westerners think of China as a strategic, economic and ideological threat. This comes not just from President Donald Trump, nor only from the security establishment, nor just from the US, nor merely from the right wing of the political spectrum: It is increasingly becoming a unifying cause.

The answer is also no, however, because the relationship with China is very different from that with the Soviet Union. China is not exporting a global ideology, but behaving as a normal great power. Again, unlike the Soviet Union, China is embedded in the world economy.

The conclusion is that across-the-board hostility towards China might be far more disruptive than the Cold War. If, above all, the Chinese people were to be convinced that the West’s aim is to stop them from enjoying a better life, the hostility would be bottomless and endless. Cooperation would collapse. Yet no country can today be an island.

It is not too late to avoid such a breakdown. The right path is to manage relations that will be both competitive and cooperative and so to recognise that China can be both foe and friend. In other words, we must embrace complexity. That is the path of maturity. In so doing, we need to recognise that the US and its allies (if the former still recognises the value of the latter) possess huge strengths.

China’s rise has been stupendous. But the US and its allies, in aggregate, spend vastly more on defence, have bigger economies and account for a larger share of world imports than China. Again, China’s dependence on markets in high-income countries is far greater than US dependence on China. It is likely that these advantages will last, because China is turning away from the path of reform, as Dr Nicholas Lardy of the Peterson Institute for International Economics argues in a new book, and so its economy could slow sharply.

Moreover, despite the global rise of authoritarianism and the post-financial crisis malaise, the high-income democracies continue to possess a more attractive ideology of freedom, democracy and the rule of law than China’s communism offers. Furthermore, it is obvious that the West’s recent failures are overwhelmingly self-inflicted: They should not be blamed on others, however attractive that option might be.

Thus, the US should view its situation with far greater equanimity than can China, provided it retains its network of alliances, especially given its geographical location and economic strengths. If it did so, it could also recognise that its interdependence with China is a stabilising force, since it strengthens both sides’ interest in peaceful relationships.

Similarly, the US would recognise that making common cause with allies, in the context of the rules-governed trading system it created, would increase pressure on China to reform. Indeed, in an interview in Davos, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe argued that the best way to deal with China is precisely in that context. To make concessions in support of a global agreement would be far easier for China than in response to bilateral US pressure. If that required reform of the World Trade Organisation’s rules, that would also be fine.

Cooperation is as essential as interdependence. We cannot manage the global environment or ensure prosperity and peace without cooperation with China. Moreover, if every country were forced to choose one side or the other, there would again be deep and costly divisions among and within countries. None of this implies that Western countries need accept whatever China wants. Takeovers of strategically important businesses could be legitimately out of bounds, on both sides. Simultaneously, if evidence of strategic danger from the presence of certain companies within our economies did exist, then action against them should be taken. But the word here is “evidence”.

Finally, and to me most significantly, it is indeed vital, as Mr Soros suggests, that we protect our freedom and those of Chinese people living in our countries from China’s new “social credit” system and other forms of extraterritorial reach, so far as we can. But this would be easier to justify if the US were not so extraterritorial, too. Indeed, the belief of the US that it is entitled to impose its priorities upon the world, willy-nilly, is highly destabilising.

A new great power has emerged, one that was never part of a Western-dominated system. In response, many are trying to shift the world into an era of unbridled strategic competition. History suggests this is dangerous. What is needed instead is a combination of competition and cooperation with a rising China. The alternative will be deepening hostility and rising disorder. Nobody sensible should want that. So stop, before it is too late. FINANCIAL TIMES



BIG PICTURE

**WEATHER**  
Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.  
**High** 33 deg C **Low** 24 deg C  
**24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday:** 33 to 52 (Moderate)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Myanmar’s tribes showcase culture

Myanmar’s first-ever Ethnic Culture Festival, which ended yesterday, saw 135 different ethnic groups gather to showcase their traditions and culture. Held on the grounds of the Kyaikkasan Stadium in Yangon, the event aimed to foster better understanding of Myanmar’s many ethnic groups and featured traditional cuisine and dances, reported Xinhua.

Among the participants were these two women who represented the Kachin people, a confederation

of ethnic groups who live in the Kachin hills in the country’s northern Kachin state. Other ethnic groups at the festival included the Kayah, Karen, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan, reported Myanmar Times.

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WHAT NUS' NET-ZERO ENERGY BUILDING  
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## NEA to ramp up dengue research after success in field tests

Project Wolbachia to be expanded to wider areas in Nee Soon East and Tampines West

Cheryl Teh

The population of dengue-carrying mosquitoes in Nee Soon East and Tampines West has been cut by at least half after the release of sterile male mosquitoes, which leads to eggs that cannot hatch. And this success will see the scheme, labelled Project Wolbachia, expanded to wider areas in the two estates.

From April last year to this month, the National Environment Agency (NEA) saw an 80 per cent fall in the Aedes mosquito population in a research area in Nee Soon East. The population was halved in the Tampines West study site, the agency said yesterday.

Still, "it is not a magic bullet" that will solve the mosquito problem, said Associate Professor Ng Lee Ching, director of the NEA's Environmental Health Institute. "It will complement what we are doing: source reduction, mozzie wipeout (campaign), and removing as many mosquitoes as possible from the community."

Dengue continues to be a perennial problem for Singapore. There were 455 cases reported in just the first two weeks of this month – triple the number reported over the same two-week period in January last year.

The Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitoes' job is to control and reduce the Aedes aegypti mosquito popula-

tion, the primary species responsible for transmitting dengue and Zika. Eggs produced from the union of a male Wolbachia-Aedes mosquito and the female Aedes mosquito will not hatch. This limits the number of mosquito larvae each female Aedes mosquito can produce.

Research on the project started in 2009 and the first phase of the field studies started in 2016.

The first small-scale field studies in Braddell Heights, Nee Soon East and Tampines West examined the behaviour of the Wolbachia-carrying Aedes aegypti in the urban environment, such as how far and high they fly, and how well they could compete with their wild counterparts to mate with females.

The second phase – from April last year to this month – involved a total of 76 HDB blocks comprising about 7,000 households. The agency also released the Wolbachia mosquitoes at higher floors, as only 6 per cent of the adult male Wolbachia-carrying mosquitoes released at the ground floor were later found on the ninth floor and higher.

The next phase, which will start next month, will see a doubling of the number of HDB blocks where the Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitoes are released.

"The data that has been generated through the different phases of the field study is essential in developing an effective long-term



The mosquito eggs in the beaker (bottom left) are fertilised and kept in trays (above) until the mosquitoes are almost fully grown and ready for release. The male Wolbachia-Aedes mosquitoes do not bite (bottom right) and when they mate with wild female Aedes mosquitoes, the eggs do not hatch. ST PHOTOS: JONATHAN CHOO



mosquito suppression programme for Singapore," said Professor Ary Hoffmann, Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne.

He is a member of Singapore's Dengue Expert Advisory Programme, which comprises experts on vector-borne diseases from Singapore, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Decreasing the population of Aedes mosquitoes drastically might be possible in the long run,

said Prof Hoffmann, who cited the example of a study in Guangzhou, where the mosquito population was reduced by 99 per cent.

But Singapore faces different challenges, he said. Compared with the urbanised, high-rise environment here, one- to two-storey buildings are prevalent in Guangzhou, which made it easier to control the population.

In the third phase, researchers will look into how many male Wol-

bachia-Aedes mosquitoes should be released to maintain a low Aedes mosquito population.

The agency will also adjust the number of mosquitoes to be released along the way – to maintain the current mosquito population, or to suppress higher numbers in the expanded area.

They will also develop the production and release of these mosquitoes on a large scale.

Six of these male Wolbachia-

Aedes mosquitoes are currently released weekly, for every person in the study area.

The NEA said yesterday that the improved results from phase two are due to the expanded area of study sites and the Wolbachia mosquitoes being released at higher floors, in addition to ground-floor releases.

In the third phase of the project, mosquitoes will be released weekly at 84 blocks in Nee Soon East, and 60 blocks in Tampines West.

With this expansion, the study will involve the largest number of households since it started – with 7,950 in Nee Soon East, and 5,560 households in Tampines West.

Mosquitoes will continue to be released around the HDB blocks, and along common corridors, but not in homes.

Residents at the field study sites might notice an increase in mosquitoes during the field study, but these male mosquitoes released will not bite or transmit diseases, NEA said.

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## Four hotels fined \$1.5m for colluding by sharing discount info

Lester Wong

Four hotels that colluded by sharing with one another the non-public room rates offered to companies have been fined more than \$1.5 million in total for infringing the Competition Act.

Singapore's competition watchdog, the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS), yesterday issued an infringement decision against the owners and operators of Capri by Fraser Changi City Singapore, Village Hotel Changi, Village Hotel Katong and Crowne Plaza Changi Air-

port Hotel. These hotels are between a five- and 15-minute drive from Changi Airport.

Capri's former owner Ascendas Frasers Pte Ltd and operator Frasers Hospitality Pte Ltd (FHPL) were slapped with the largest penalty of \$793,925, with the hotel's current owner Frasers Hospitality Trustee Pte Ltd and FHPL handed a further fine of \$216,526.

The Village hotels, which are both managed by Far East Hospitality Management Pte Ltd, were fined \$286,610, while Crowne Plaza received a fine of \$225,293.

The information shared across the four hotels included the per-

centage discount that corporate customers asked for during confidential negotiations, and the responses of the hotels' sales representatives.

The commission provided extracts of four WhatsApp conversations between the sales representatives at its media briefing, which it had obtained during its investigation that culminated in a raid on June 30, 2015.

Sales representatives of Capri and the two Village hotels exchanged information between July 3, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

The same Capri sales representative also exchanged information

with a Crowne Plaza counterpart between Jan 14, 2014 and June 30, 2015.

The watchdog said the two Village hotels and Crowne Plaza applied for leniency treatment and received lighter penalties, which are granted when businesses provide information on their cartel services. Capri did not apply for leniency, CCCS added.

"The exchange of non-public commercially sensitive information between competitors is harmful to competition and customers in the market as it reduces the competitive pressures faced by competitors in determining their commer-

cial decisions, including the price they will offer to customers," said the commission's chief executive Toh Han Li.

"If a business receives such information from its competitor, it should immediately and clearly distance itself from such conduct and report it to CCCS."

Mr Toh added that this was the second such case CCCS has handled where competitors shared commercially sensitive information, which is distinct from cases involving price-rigging behaviour.

In the other case, two ferry operators serving the Singapore-Batam route were in July 2012 fined

\$172,906 and \$113,860 respectively for infringing the Competition Act.

Responding to queries from The Straits Times, Far East Hospitality chief executive officer Arthur Kiong said: "Although disappointed with the infringement decision, the Group respects the position taken by CCCS."

"We have and continue to take various steps to review and implement rigorous compliance and training programmes to ensure that our business practices are and continue to be fully compliant with all applicable laws."

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## Honestbee suspends tie-up with FairPrice

Shabana Begum

Full-time freelance personal shopper Desiree Quah had a rude shock when she showed up at a FairPrice store in the Central Business District to start her four-hour shift for online grocery service Honestbee.

The 24-year-old, who has worked for Honestbee for the past three years, had just signed in when a Fair-

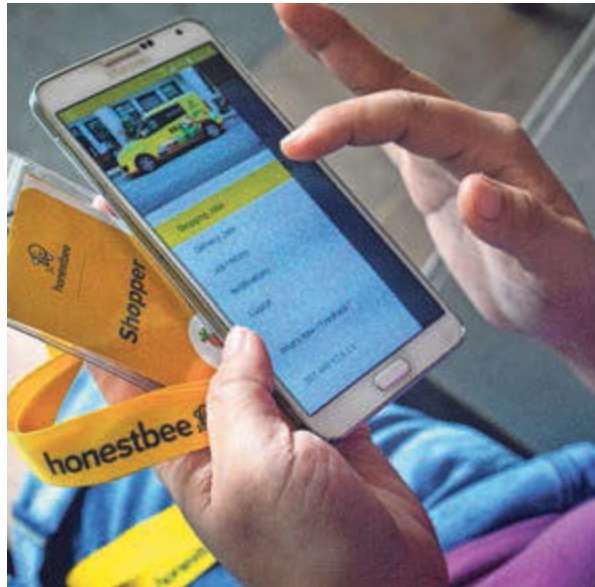
Price employee told her it would be her "last day".

Ms Quah, who earns about \$300 a week, later found out through an e-mail from Honestbee that it would be temporarily suspending its partnership with FairPrice from today, and that all freelance shoppers would be offered a "nominal payment of \$11/hour" for all slots booked from today till Feb 10.

Freelancers select a time slot and an outlet where they wish to go to pick up items for people who have placed orders on the Honestbee app.

FairPrice said in a statement that the temporary suspension was "due to a review of the existing operations and collaboration process".

An Honestbee spokesman noted that the company was "sensitive to the concerns our bees (personal shoppers) are facing – especially when this has happened close to



Honestbee says its personal shoppers "can continue to shop from other merchants or take on a role at other areas of our businesses in the meantime". ST FILE PHOTO

the Chinese New Year holidays".

The spokesman added: "We want to assure our bees that they are empowered to choose and can continue to shop from other merchants or take on a role at other areas of our businesses in the meantime."

While this means freelancers like Mr Daniel Lim, 28, can still fulfil orders for shoppers who order groceries from other stores like Tesco, the number of orders will be much lower without FairPrice on board.

"There will now be very little or no demand... There is no guarantee for our income. It is unlikely that we will get any more regular work," he said.

Honestbee, founded in 2015, began as a grocery delivery service and later introduced laundry and food delivery services. It opened its first physical store last October.

The 60,000 sq ft retail space in

Pasir Panjang stocks 20,000 products, including fresh produce, seafood and meat, and features a fully automated check-out system where customers pay using a smartphone app and robots pack their groceries into bags.

Associate Professor Sharon Ng from Nanyang Technological University's division of marketing and international business noted that Honestbee was incorporating technology in many of its processes and services, and the suspension with FairPrice could be due to this.

She noted, however, that the way it was executed could have been better "to take into account the impact on the personal shoppers".

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• Additional reporting by Jev Akshay Jeevan





(From left) Ms Vanessa Ng, senior vice-president of human resources, Singapore Airlines; Ms Kathy Lai, deputy chief executive officer, Enterprise Singapore; Mr Chng Kai Fong, managing director, Economic Development Board; Mr Chaly Mah, chairman, Singapore Tourism Board; Mr Douglas Foo, president, Singapore Manufacturing Federation; and moderator Darryl David, chief executive officer of SJI International; at the forum on employability yesterday. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

# Hiring: Grades matter but other factors vital

Good scores help but many firms also look for certain character traits, say bosses at forum

Jolene Ang

Companies are still drawn to good grades as these are a strong sign of a prospective employee's capability, leading employers told students yesterday. But other factors, such as how candidates work under pressure, are increasingly being considered in the hiring process.

Speaking at a forum on employability organised by the Nanyang Technological University Students' Union, Economic Development Board managing director Chng Kai Fong said: "Everyone is trying to shift away from an emphasis on

grades but there is no substitute."

However, he stressed that "good grades" do not necessarily equate with a perfect score, adding that even a shortlisted candidate with a perfect score may not get the job.

DBS chief executive Piyush Gupta, who delivered a keynote speech, said that from a human resource (HR) perspective, grades still provide the easiest way to shortlist candidates.

He also explained how the bank is using a new "virtual recruiter", a chatbot called Jobs Intelligence Maestro (Jim), which he said has changed the way the bank shortlists applicants.

It can review curricula vitae, collect applicants' responses for pre-screening questions, and conduct psychometric profiling assessments.

Other employers said they look for different character traits such as curiosity, humility and a willingness to learn.

Singapore Tourism Board chairman Chaly Mah said more companies are assessing candidates through internship programmes, workshops and team projects.

Mr Chng brought up a scholarship candidate who did not get a perfect score, but during his interview displayed "curiosity and a desire to explore".

"He wrote about bitcoin in his essay and I engaged him in conversation about the different cryptocurrencies," said Mr Chng.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR VALUES

Titles come and go, but there's no substitute for values... which cannot be picked up within the four walls of a classroom. Would you prefer a second-class honours graduate with stellar leadership experience, or a first-class who has no heart to groom the next generation?



SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE TAN XIN HAO

"I learnt he lives in a two-room flat... but he saves up his own money to invest. That's what employers are looking for. Part of that is reflected in your grades and CV, part of it in your interview answers."

However, in response to the discussion, Education Minister Ong Ye Kung, who was patron and guest of honour at the conference, said: "If everyone thinks like that, why is it that in society, among students, they feel like grades are still so important?"

He added: "Are those the only answers, and do we therefore have to settle with the situation today, or do we still see HR practices evolving further today?"

Mr Danny Yong, chief investment officer and founding partner of Dymon Asia Capital, said: "A lot

of learning is done on the job and not in school. The most important ingredient for success is opportunity."

He threw out a challenge to the other employers – to hire up to 10 per cent of employees "blind to resumes and grades", but instead choose them based on their traits.

In a five-minute speech on the same topic, Singapore Management University undergraduate Tan Xin Hao said: "Titles come and go, but there's no substitute for values... which cannot be picked up within the four walls of a classroom."

"Would you prefer a second-class honours graduate with stellar leadership experience, or a first-class who has no heart to groom the next generation?"

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## New app for commuters with special needs being tested

Toh Ting Wei

A new mobile app that aims to make it easier for commuters with special needs to take public buses is on trial till end-June.

The app rolled out by the Land Transport Authority (LTA) will provide audio alerts for visually impaired commuters, while those in wheelchairs can use it to check whether there is room for them to board the bus.

The trial, which began on Monday, involves three buses from service 139 which serves the Enabling Village in Redhill.

From May to end-June, these three buses will be redeployed to service 141, which goes past the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped in Toa Payoh.

Thereafter, the LTA will assess if the app, named Mobility Assistance for the Visually Impaired and Special Users (Mavis), can be used on more public bus services.

Senior Minister of State for Transport Lam Pin Min announced the trial yesterday at an event in the Enabling Village, a community space dedicated to integrating people with disabilities into society, where he also shared findings of a six-month public engagement exercise for the next Land Transport Master Plan.

A common feedback point from participants was the need to make public transport more inclusive, said Dr Lam. The Mavis app does so by providing personalised journey guidance for commuters with special needs, he added.

To participate in the trial, commuters with special needs can register with SG Enable via e-mail at mavis@sgenable.sg

App users will have to select their boarding and alighting stops when



submitting a request through Mavis, and bus drivers will be notified so they can provide assistance.

Visually impaired commuters can use the app to trigger an announcement from a speaker near the boarding door of the bus when it arrives. An audio announcement will also be made in the bus whenever it is approaching a stop. Passengers with hearing aids that have the T-Loop feature – a special type of sound system – will be alerted to the upcoming bus stop through the system.

IT program executive Chong Kwek Bin, 37, said the external bus speaker would be very helpful for visually impaired commuters like himself. And if the app is rolled out across the entire bus network, people with visual impairments "can even explore bus routes", he added.

A survey conducted to gather feedback on the Land Transport Master Plan 2040 found that 85 per cent of commuters are willing to accept delays of up to five minutes to allow commuters with special needs to safely board or alight trains and buses.

The public consultation, which started in August last year, received more than 7,000 responses from commuters, academics, industry players and transport workers.

The respondents gave various suggestions to improve the transport system, including widening existing paths shared by pedestrians and cyclists as an alternative to building dedicated cycling paths.

Respondents also generally agreed to prioritise the needs of commuters, such as those using buses or bicycles, over that of private car users when designing roads and paths.

In LTA's online survey, the number of people who supported reducing roads from three lanes to two lanes to create dedicated cycling paths was more than double that of those who opposed such measures.

The Land Transport Master Plan Advisory Panel will consider the views gathered and finalise recommendations to the Government by the middle of next month.

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Above: Mr Chong Kwek Bin getting ready to board the bus with the bus driver's help. Left: A sign on the bus about a hearing-aid feature in the app. ST PHOTOS: JASMINE CHOONG



A wheelchair-bound commuter using the app to alert the bus driver that he wants to board the bus at the bus stop.

## Visitor numbers for museums, heritage centres hit record high

Olivia Ho

Museums and heritage institutions in Singapore are gaining popularity, with visitor numbers hitting a record high in 2017, according to data from the 2018 Singapore Cultural Statistics released yesterday.

Visitor numbers to national museums and heritage institutions reached 5.4 million in 2017, up from 5.1 million the year before.

This was in tandem with the record-high attendance of 11.3 million at free arts and cultural events, a figure released earlier, on Jan 22, by the Ministry for Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY).

The MCCY noted major increases in footfall to the National Museum of Singapore and the Malay Heritage Centre. The former had a special exhibition, Witness To War: Remembering 1942, as well as its 130th anniversary celebrations. A popular exhibition at the latter was Sirri Na Pesse: Navigating Bugis Identities In Singapore.

National Gallery Singapore drew 1.8 million visitors in 2017, up from 1.5 million the year before, helped by blockbuster shows such as Yayoi Kusama: Life Is The Heart Of A Rainbow and Century Of Light, which combined Impressionist paintings with works by two 19th-century South-east Asian artists.

The gallery's chief executive Chong Siak Ching said its team is focused on growing audiences by creating "meaningful and inspiring encounters with art".

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu said the findings show Singapore's arts and culture scene is "vibrant and thriving".

She added that the wide variety of arts and heritage events is "the result of hard work and dedication by our arts and culture practitioners, supporters, volunteers and all who appreciate Singapore's culture and heritage".

Investment manager Ivy Goh, 41, visits museums and heritage institutions some 10 times a year to expose her two sons, aged six and four, to art and culture and she hopes to go even more regularly in years to come.

She recalled being impressed by exhibitions such as Century Of Light and Witness To War, especially their multimedia and interactive elements. "It's a very good way of introducing my sons to history, to things they don't get to see any more."

While government spending on the arts and culture rose to \$840.7 million in 2017 from \$720 million the year before, the data also shows that arts and cultural philanthropy fell in 2017 to \$63.8 million from \$74.3 million in 2016 and \$152.6 million in 2015.

An MCCY spokesman noted that larger infrastructure projects in 2015 such as National Gallery Singapore and Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, which would have required bigger donor contributions, might have impacted giving in subsequent years.

"There are also upcoming infrastructure projects including Esplanade's Waterfront Theatre and the revamp of Singapore Art Museum," she said. "Donors keen on making transformational gifts have more opportunities to do so."

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SEE OPINION A24

## \$616m contract awarded to build part of N-S Corridor

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) has awarded a \$615.9 million contract for the construction of the North-South Corridor, a 21.5km ex-

pressway which will connect towns in the north to the city centre.

As part of the contract, Shanghai Tunnel Engineering Co (Singapore) will construct an underground road tunnel, an MRT station box – an underground structure that lays the foundation for a future station – and commuter facilities such as pedestrian overhead bridges between Sin Ming Avenue and Ang Mo Kio Avenue 3.

The 800m-long road tunnel will feature a pair of three-lane roads. It

will be integrated with the planned Teck Ghee station on the future Cross Island Line. These works are expected to begin by the second quarter of this year.

Shanghai Tunnel Engineering has previously completed railway infrastructure projects with tunnels in the Circle Line, Downtown Line and Tuas West Extension. It is also currently involved in the construction of tunnels for the Thomson-East Coast Line.

Last month, LTA awarded six con-

tracts worth a total of \$3.14 billion for the construction of six sections of the expressway.

Those contracts were for the design and construction of tunnels, along with facilities such as pedestrian overhead bridges and bus stops. The North-South Corridor, which is largely underground, will feature dedicated bus and cycling lanes. It is expected to be completed in 2026.

Toh Ting Wei





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**Low Cheong Kee**  
*Founder & Managing Director  
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Learn more about Work-Life Strategy and its business benefits at [worklifeworks.sg](http://worklifeworks.sg).





A panel of speakers sharing views on what recovery from mental health issues entails: (from left) Ms Tina Hung, deputy CEO, NCSS; Mr Jeffery Tan from Mindset Care; Ms Sumaiyah Mohamed from Club Heal; Professor Chua Hong Choon, CEO of IMH; Ms Porsche Poh, executive director, Silver Ribbon; and Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, founder, Binjai Tree. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

President's Challenge

# 2019 event to focus on mental health

## 11 projects to help vulnerable groups will get funding for up to 3 years, instead of 1 year

Vanessa Liu

When fishmonger Li Hee Meng closed down his business, handed down from his parents, 10 years ago because it was not doing well, he sank into depression and remained unemployed for about eight years.

In 2016, he was admitted to the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and was treated as an inpatient for the next two years for schizophrenia.

Last October, Mr Li was referred to the Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS) where he was trained in the cafeteria on food preparation, dish-washing and cleaning for two months. Thereafter, the centre secured him a part-time position as a kitchen helper at IMH's canteen and he worked there for six weeks.

The 52-year-old started full-time work as a store assistant at Prime supermarket two weeks ago and said he was satisfied with his new job.

He said in Mandarin: "I do shelving and stock-taking. After Chinese New Year, they will teach me how to order stocks from the suppliers."

Mr Li is one of the 50 or so people with mental health issues that have benefited from SACS' Transitional Employment and Work Integration Programme. The programme seeks to provide those enrolled with on-the-job training opportunities within the centre's internal units and social enterprises, so that they can be ready to re-enter the workforce.

The programme is one of 11 that will receive funds from the Empowering for Life Fund (ELF) this year. The programmes are aimed at aid-

ing those at a disadvantage, including people with disabilities and children with special needs.

The Transitional Employment and Work Integration Programme was highlighted by President Halimah Yacob in her address at the launch of the President's Challenge 2019 at the Singapore Expo yesterday.

The launch was held in conjunction with the opening of the Singapore Mental Health Conference. The two-day conference is jointly organised by IMH, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), the Agency for Integrated Care and the Health Promotion Board (HPB).

President Halimah said ELF programmes support vulnerable groups by equipping them with the necessary skills and resources to proactively solve problems, develop resilience in overcoming life's challenges and contribute meaningfully to society.

The ELF was first set up under

the President's Challenge in February last year to support programmes that empower vulnerable individuals through skills upgrading, capacity building and employment.

Madam Halimah said that ELF will fund each approved project for up to three years from this year, instead of the initial one year. She expressed the hope that the certainty of funding over a longer period of time would encourage volunteer welfare organisations to be open to trying out new approaches to support the vulnerable.

The 2016 Singapore Mental Health Study showed that one in seven adults had experienced a mood, anxiety or alcohol use disorder at some point in his lifetime and about three-quarters of these people did not seek help.

"This year, by spotlighting on mental health, I hope that we as a community are more aware of the needs of persons with mental health conditions and can better support them in their journey of recovery and reintegration.

"I hope that President's Challenge 2019 can bring about new programmes and approaches to help this group of individuals as well as their caregivers," said President Halimah.

President's Challenge 2019, which focuses on mental health, will be raising funds for 67 organisations spanning a wide range of service sectors.

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President Halimah Yacob hopes that the certainty of funding over a longer period of time would encourage volunteer welfare organisations to be open to trying out new approaches to support the vulnerable.

## SMC: Doctors not expected to inform patients of all possible complications

Rei Kurohi and Lim Min Zhang

Doctors are not expected to inform patients of all possible complications, the Singapore Medical Council (SMC) said yesterday following concerns raised last week after a private orthopaedic doctor was fined \$100,000 for not telling his patient about possible side effects from a commonly used injection he gave her.

The council also said the decision by the disciplinary tribunal did not mean that doctors must take written consent for every minor treatment or procedure.

"The decision merely reminds doctors that they should document the fact that they have explained the treatment or procedure and the patient's consent," said the SMC in the statement.

The doctor who was fined, Dr Lim Lian Arn, had given his patient a H&L steroid injection for pain in her left wrist. He did not tell her of the possible side effects of the injection but had not actively recommended the treatment.

The injection can cause a patient to experience increased pain and inflammation in the area injected, which can be worse than the pain and inflammation caused by the condition being treated. The pain typically lasts for one to two days.

More than 4,000 people, mostly doctors, later signed a petition to Health Minister Gan Kim Yong following the ruling, concerned that the ruling could change the way medicine is practised here by imposing a significant additional burden on doctors.

SMC yesterday said the court clarified that an "information dump" would not be appropriate, and that "a reasonable patient would not need or want to know and understand every iota of information before deciding whether to undergo a proposed treatment".

The disciplinary tribunal appreciated that it was "in fact not common" to take specific written consent for a H&L injection, and is not mandating such a practice. However, the tribunal said that it would be good clinical practice to document in the case notes that a patient had been informed and was agreeable to the injection – "a proposition which no doctor would reasonably disagree with", said SMC.

Dr Lim had admitted that he had not advised the patient of any possible complications, said SMC.

"He explained that this case was an isolated incident and wholly uncharacteristic of his usual clinical practice, as he could normally outline all treatment options to his patients, including the possible complications of the treatment," it said.

"It should be emphasised that Dr Lim was charged for wholly failing to inform the patient of any possible complications and not for failing to inform the patient of all possible complications that could arise from the H&L injection."

Dr Tho Kam San, who started the petition, told The Straits Times that he respects the SMC's decision and was glad to note that doctors would not face the expectation to inform their patients of every possible complication.

"We would like to thank Minister Gan Kim Yong and SMC for clarifying the position on this issue. We all strive to develop the best healthcare in Singapore to cater for the needs of all Singaporeans."

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## NUS launches net-zero energy building

Derek Wong

The National University of Singapore (NUS) yesterday launched Singapore's first net-zero energy building built from scratch at its School of Design and Environment (SDE).

Environmentally friendly features such as a solar panel roof and hybrid cooling system help the new building, called SDE4, to have net-zero energy consumption.

This means that the building produces more energy than it consumes – by harnessing solar energy, for instance.

More than 1,200 solar photovoltaic panels help to power the entire building and produce more than 500MW-hours of energy a year, equivalent to the annual energy consumption of about 110 four-room Housing Board flats.

The building is estimated to save about \$180,000 in energy costs a year, although the cost of its construction was not revealed.

NUS president Tan Eng Chye said: "We hope that this novel concept will inspire future high-performance buildings and sustainable development designs in Singapore and beyond."

Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Finance and chairman of the National Research Foundation, said it is important that buildings like SDE4 play a part in tackling climate change, as the building sector contributes a quarter of Singapore's carbon emissions.

"(SDE4) is a good example of how

we can achieve better and more sustainable outcomes when the Government, industry and academia work closely together," said Mr Heng.

He highlighted the building's hybrid cooling system, a mixed-ventilation design that combines air-conditioning and fresh air, as a way technology can help reduce energy consumption.

In Singapore, the process of cooling buildings usually accounts for 40 per cent to 50 per cent of a building's energy consumption.

SDE4's cooling system is designed as a single-pass system with no recirculated air, as it continuously supplies fresh air to the building's occupants. The public spaces are also designed to maximise natural breeze passing through.

Project partners include architecture firm Serie+Multiply, infrastructure consultancy Surbana Jurong and contractor Kajima Corporation.

Construction for SDE4 began about two years ago and the building can hold about 400 students.

Other net-zero energy buildings here are in the works.

The Tahir Foundation Connexion, which is also fully solar-powered, is due to be completed at the end of this year at Singapore Management University.

Existing net-zero energy buildings here, such as the BCA (Building and Construction Authority) Academy, have been modified to become so.

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## Eco-design from scratch

The National University of Singapore yesterday launched SDE4, which is designed to have net-zero energy consumption. This means the building produces more energy than it consumes – by harnessing solar energy, for instance. The six-storey building is the first net-zero energy building in Singapore to be built from scratch rather than retrofitted, and has a number of environmentally friendly features.

**Solar panels**  
**1,225**  
solar photovoltaic panels installed on the roof will provide more than 500MW-hours of energy per year, enough to power about

**110** four-room Housing Board flats for a year.

### Hybrid cooling system

An innovative cooling system not only provides air-conditioning but also supplies fresh air at higher temperatures and humidity compared with a conventional air-conditioning system. This way, rooms will not be overly cooled. Ceiling fans help to circulate the cool air.



### "Floating boxes"

The rooms are designed to maximise ventilation and natural lighting. The 'floating box' structure creates space for natural breeze to flow into the rooms. This helps to cut back on the need for air-conditioning.



Source: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE PHOTOS: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE, ALPHONSUS CHERN, LIM KAILI STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS



Pedra Branca: Story Of The Unheard Cases, shows how Singapore prepared to counter Malaysia's applications for a revision and interpretation of the 2008 International Court of Justice ruling that gave Singapore sovereignty over Pedra Branca. ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



# Gleaning lessons from dispute over Pedra Branca

Legal trio say excellence in international law, teamwork key in protecting nation's interests

**Adrian Lim**  
Political Correspondent

Singapore's decades-long dispute with Malaysia over Pedra Branca has yielded several takeaways: how the Republic must be a centre of excellence in international law, be prepared for surprises and respond nimbly, and work cohesively as a team across government agencies.

These were some of the lessons shared yesterday by former senior minister S. Jayakumar, Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh and Deputy Attorney-General Lionel Yee. The trio were involved in two

legal cases over Pedra Branca, the most recent of which was to go before an international court last June, but Malaysia pulled out before it took place.

They have written a book, Pedra Branca: Story Of The Unheard Cases, which gives a behind-the-scenes account of the latest case and how Singapore prepared to counter Malaysia's applications for a revision and interpretation of the 2008 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that gave Singapore sovereignty over Pedra Branca.

Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, who launched the book yesterday, said it "tells the story of a small country mounting a

huge and robust effort on the global stage", and "records an important chapter in a much longer story of ups and downs in our bilateral relations with Malaysia".

Referring to recent bilateral issues on territorial waters and airspace management, Dr Balakrishnan said he had spoken about Singapore's position and approach in Parliament earlier this month and did not want to go into detail.

But, he added: "Let me just underscore this: As a small nation, we want good relations with all our neighbours, we want to have as many friends as possible. And this is important when we address the inevitable bilateral issues that will crop up from time to time."

"Our paramount objective will always be to protect our sovereignty, independence and national interests, and to do so in accordance

with international law and to ensure that all parties fully honour the agreements which we have solemnly entered into," he added.

During the book's launch at The Pod in the National Library building, Prof Jayakumar, Prof Koh and Mr Yee also took part in a 30-minute panel discussion moderated by Ms Lydia Lim, head of training and talent development at The Straits Times.

Asked what lessons could be gained from the two Pedra Branca cases, Prof Koh stressed the importance for Singapore to produce good international lawyers in the Attorney General's Chambers, universities and private sector.

Prof Jayakumar said good political leadership is needed to "manage the bilateral relations in such a way that you keep things on an even keel", and not to let the latest issue derail the overall tenor of co-operation and bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, Mr Yee said in working as a team, government agencies have to go beyond the limits of their responsibilities and understand each other's areas.

Ms Lim asked the panel about Singapore's move last month to file a declaration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos). It was made after Malaysia unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits, encroaching into territorial waters which Singapore regards as its own.

The Unclos declaration ensures no country can unilaterally initiate third-party arbitration or adjudication on maritime boundary disputes against Singapore.

Prof Koh said it was done to prevent Malaysia from making a "pre-emptive strike" and initiating unilateral proceedings against Singapore - which was what it did in 2003 in a land reclamation dispute.

He added: "Singapore has not changed our consistent policy of upholding international law... If negotiations fail, we are willing to refer the disputes to a binding third-party dispute settlement procedure. All we want to do is to be consulted, to agree on the choice of forum and the precise manner in which the issue is to be framed."

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• Pedra Branca: Story Of The Unheard Cases, is published by Straits Times Press and is available in major bookstores and at [www.stbooks.sg](http://www.stbooks.sg) for \$25 (with GST).



Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim joining pupils and parents in a Storygami activity during a workshop on reading using the Nabil Nabilah Reader Series, at Punggol View Primary School yesterday. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

## Malay book series extended to pre-school level

**Ang Yiyiing**

Parents whose children take Malay in school will be able to read with them using books from the Nabil Nabilah Reader Series from as early as when they are in kindergarten, up till the end of their primary school years.

The extension to the series to promote Malay reading - which currently comprises books for Primary 1 to 4 pupils - was announced yesterday by the chairman of the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim. He was at a workshop for parents in Punggol

View Primary School.

He noted that the series, which features a pair of fictional siblings - brother Nabil and sister Nabilah - through stories set in Singapore, has gained traction among pupils, parents and teachers.

Referring to the series, he said afterwards to reporters: "It has become a platform for us to inculcate the reading habits among our children. At the same time, it opens up many more opportunities to talk about issues and things that are relevant to the lives of our children in Singapore... It looks at it from the perspective of Malay language and mother tongue. That is very important for us."

He said the learning of the mother tongue was becoming

more challenging with the widespread use of English, and "going upstream" to Kindergarten 1 and 2 with the reader series would expose children to the mother tongue at an early age.

The books for K1 and K2 children, as well as for Primary 5 and 6 pupils, will be rolled out by 2021. The series was first launched in 2015 for Primary 1 and 2 pupils, while books for Primary 3 and 4 were launched last year.

Each of the 175 primary schools has five sets of the books, with PDF versions available to the public on the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee website.

Mr Mus Iskandar Abdul Motalib, 40, who attended the workshop with his daughter Maisarah Rifqah,

aged eight and a Primary 3 pupil at Punggol View Primary, said he and his wife read books from the Nabil Nabilah Reader Series with his daughter on weekends.

Said the assistant engineer: "The stories are more engaging; they have the Singapore context. As a family unit, we can relate to the stories."

Mr Mus Iskandar said that with the books for younger children, it meant that he would be able to read them with his younger child, now aged four months, when he goes to kindergarten.

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• The PDF versions of the books can be accessed at <https://www.mllpc.sg>

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# Facebook’s new ops centre here a positive move, say observers

They welcome social media giant’s bid to fight fake news linked to elections in region

Cara Wong

Facebook will launch a new operations centre here to monitor and manage content related to political elections in the region, a move observers see as a step in the right direction to fight fake news. It will be one of two such new re-

gional centres in the world, the other being in Dublin, Ireland. Facebook said the centres will serve as an additional layer of defence to fight misinformation and prevent abuse of the social media. “We have dedicated teams working on every upcoming election around the world, and we have been localising our efforts here in

the Asia-Pacific to prevent interference on our platform, in countries where there are planned elections in 2019,” said a Facebook spokesman yesterday, in response to queries from The Straits Times. The teams detect and remove fake accounts, tackle coordinated abuse and work with fact-checkers to prevent the spread of misinformation, said the spokesman, noting there were 30,000 people involved in this work which was also aimed at bringing about more transparency and accountability to advertisers.

Facebook has come under fire globally for allowing the spread of fake news on its platform, which critics said hampered political elections around the world. News of the operations centre in Singapore was welcomed by observers and experts in the country, who saw it as a step in the right direction to fight fake news. MP Seah Kian Peng, who sits on the parliamentary Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods, said: “As we all know, this is a real problem with serious conse-

quences and a malice which every society and country is facing. “We should welcome all media, especially social media platforms and technology companies that affirm such a stand and step up their own efforts to address this.” Associate chair of research Alton Chua, of the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information at Nanyang Technological University, agreed, noting that every piece of emerging information during an election had the potential to tilt users’ perceptions either in

favour of or against candidates. “Under mounting international pressure, Facebook which initially denied its role in allowing the unfettered spread of misinformation, has now agreed to play its part in weeding out falsehood on its network,” said Associate Professor Chua. However, Dr Shashi Jayakumar, head of the Centre of Excellence for National Security at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said the social media giant should try to stay ahead of the curve in outmanoeuvring adversaries who manipulate its platform. “We have to see if they (Facebook) are simply doing mundane or routine work like removing fake accounts, or whether they try to get much closer to the source of election manipulation, and try to be just as refined,” said Dr Shashi. “What we need is a sophisticated, nuanced understanding of not just current but future threats.”

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At Teck Kee Tanglin Pau’s Killiney Road branch, its popular char siew bun was sold out by 1.30pm and staff said that more than 1,000 were snapped up. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

## Teck Kee Tanglin Pau shutter early as buns sell out

Choo Yun Ting

Heritage brand Teck Kee Tanglin Pau called it a day last night after its three outlets sold out its buns. Fans snapped up the buns at the outlets in Killiney Road, Bukit Timah and Serangoon in just a few hours, after news of its impending closure spread on social media. The company first announced on its Facebook page yesterday morning that its last day of operations was today. No reason was given for the closure. Last night, however, it updated on Facebook that yesterday was its last day of operations. “Thank you for the overwhelming support. We have sold out,” it said. A long queue formed at the Killiney Road branch and by 1.30pm, its popular char siew bun was sold out. More than 1,000 were snapped up, staff told The Straits Times. The Bukit Timah branch ran out of buns by noon. Mr Adrian Neo, 33, was at the Killiney Road outlet. He told ST that he was sad about the shop’s closure as the buns were part of his childhood. “I bought its last siew mai,” he said. Mr Liu Jichang, 69, told Shin Min Daily News that he went to the Serangoon outlet in the morning to buy his favourite lotus seed paste bun, but it was sold out. Teck Kee Tanglin Pau was established in 1948 and was famous for its buns that were handmade with fresh ingredients. But those lamenting its closure may not have to despair. A cryptic farewell on its Facebook page suggests that it may not have said its final goodbye. In a post yesterday, it said: “Thank you for all your support for the past 71 years. Hope to serve everyone again soon.”

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# Singapore shaped by port-city past: Historian

Melody Zaccheus  
Heritage and Community  
Correspondent

As a port city that goes back hundreds of years, Singapore has seen vast changes to what constitutes its hinterland and this has shaped its present-day identity. The study of Singapore’s history as a port city can supplement colonial and nation-state narratives, historian Tan Tai Yong said at an IPS-Nathan lecture at Yale-NUS College last night. He said the functions of port cities – with their hinterlands dependent on economic conditions – often shape the composition, social structure and development of mercantile groups and institutions. “For instance, it considers how the character and personality of the island state might have roots in re-

gional identities and dynamics that predate 1965 or even 1819,” said Professor Tan, who is also president of Yale-NUS College. His lecture, titled Singapore’s Story: A Port City In Search Of Hinterlands, traced the changing face of Singapore’s port and its hinterland over the past 700 years and was attended by about 300 people. This is his third public lecture in a series, which started in September, that takes a look at Singapore’s 700-year history as the country marks the bicentennial arrival of the British in 1819. Prof Tan noted that Singapore’s hinterland in the early centuries was a transshipment centre was effectively the maritime space around it and was not dependent on nearby land masses. During the colonial era, Singapore became “the great emporium and fulcrum” of the neighbouring

seas trade. It dealt mainly in local produce – agricultural and mineral products grown or produced in the surrounding archipelago – and sent them to colonial ports for packing and shipment to consumer countries. Trade also expanded to the various islands of the East Indies, the Peninsula, Siam and parts of Indo-China. With a liberal immigration policy for traders and workers, the overlapping hinterlands and networks created a port city of immigrants from China, India, the Malay Archipelago and other places, said Prof Tan. These different trading communities eventually constituted the plural and cosmopolitan society of Singapore, and from there, a local experience began to emerge, he said. “Singapore became the heart of the intellectual world of South-east Asia. From the late 19th century on-

wards, the port city was not only bustling with commerce. It was a centre for Malay culture and literature, of Chinese diasporic intellectual and political ferment, and of Indian debates on cultural and religious reformism,” he said. “The port city became a dynamic force for social change.” By the late 19th century, Singapore became a staple port to the Malay peninsula. It was where tin, rubber and petroleum, extracted from the peninsula, were processed and exported elsewhere. By this time, noted Prof Tan, Singapore had become so used to this hinterland that it had “become inconceivable that the island could actually survive without it”. After World War II, Singapore’s political leaders desired to create a common market with Malaya. Singapore briefly regained its northern hinterland when it formed

Malaysia with the Federation of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak in 1963. Prof Tan noted that after Independence, Singapore continued to define and re-define its hinterland. In the early 2000s, political leaders described Singapore as having a seven-hour hinterland, encompassing a region within a seven-hour flight radius from Singapore, referring to major markets such as Asean, China, India and Australia. While the port continues to shape the fortunes of the country, Prof Tan suggested other ways forward. Now a global city in a globalised world, the idea of a fixed economic hinterland has lost its meaning for Singapore. So his suggestion was to always remain open, be flexible and look out for opportunities. “Hinterlands may shift, but if you can make yourself relevant, you will be able to adapt,” he said. He cited the examples of New York and London with their declining world ports and said both places “have transformed into global cities with diverse functions”.

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Yale-NUS College president and historian Tan Tai Yong says Singapore’s identity has been shaped by changes to its hinterland and port over seven centuries.

## Watch four short films that pay tribute to Merdeka Generation

Linette Lai

Four short films on growing up in the 1970s are being released today as a tribute to citizens from the Merdeka Generation who helped to shape post-independence Singapore. They will be shown in cinemas before movies, on the Gov.sg YouTube channel and on free-to-air television. In one, a schoolgirl with a promising future is forced to leave school early so that she can help supplement her family’s income. In another, a young man listens to his grandfather recount his experience

of being one of the first to perform national service. Each three-minute film was directed by a local filmmaker, and touches on themes like resilience, sacrifice and the kampung spirit. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong first used the term “Merdeka Generation” during his National Day Rally speech last year to refer to some 500,000 Singaporeans born in the 1950s. He was announcing a new multi-billion-dollar package – dubbed the Merdeka Generation Package – to help this group with their healthcare needs. All four short films – known collectively as The Merdeka Stories –

were written by playwright Jean Tay, who has written more than 20 plays and musicals, and was also the scriptwriter for two National Day parades. They were directed by Mr Don Aravind, Mr Martin Hong, Ms Priscilla Ang Geck Geck and Ms Wee Li Lin. The films are being launched by media group mm2 Entertainment in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information. During a media preview yesterday, Ms Tay said that one of the challenges in writing the films was having to tell a complete story within a three-minute timeframe. “Even within that short space of



(From left) Ms Wee Li Lin, Mr Don Aravind, Ms Jean Tay and Mr Martin Hong at the media preview of The Merdeka Stories. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY

time, you can see that the characters have gone on a journey,” she said. “It’s part of the craft of it.” Mr Aravind, who worked on long-

running Mediacorp drama Tanglin, said key elements in his short film were inspired by the experiences of his parents, both of whom are from

the Merdeka Generation. “I referred back to a lot of the stories my parents used to tell me, about how my father used to woo my mother,” Mr Aravind said. His film focuses on a young Indian man who must try to win the approval of his Chinese girlfriend’s father. Ms Ang added that working on her piece – about a young girl who helps her mother sell home-made kueh door to door – helped her learn new things about her own family. “I learnt a lot about my own relatives whom I never get a chance to speak much to,” she said. “My grandfather and my aunts had a lot of fun sharing their past stories.” The films are a lead-up to an event this Saturday, when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will be hosting a tribute to the Merdeka Generation. A separate seven-part documentary series on this group has also been launched.

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# IT'S A DATE

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## TOP PICKS

### Crunch time

Bakery Med Pastry has just launched its Nuts and Seed Thins and Nonya Crisps. The thins consist of almonds, pumpkin and sunflower seeds that have a nice crunch. The Nonya Crisps are available in six flavours from pandan to miso. Find them at Food and Beverage Fair 2019, from March 21 to 24 at Singapore Expo Hall 5.



### Bring the kids

Until April this year, the Kids Dine Free offer will be available at more than 25 restaurants around the country, including Cali at 31 Rochester Drive and 2 Changi Business Park Avenue 1. One child dines free with every paying adult who charges the bill to his HSBC Visa Platinum Credit Card. Visit [www.kidsdinefree.sg](http://www.kidsdinefree.sg) to learn more.



### Latin feasts

February's Visa Foodie Trail will bring your tastebuds on a journey through Latin cuisine at various restaurants all around the country. Visa Cardholders enjoy up to 18 per cent off a la carte food items. Visit [www.visafoodietrail.sg](http://www.visafoodietrail.sg) for the full list of participating restaurants.



Dine in the luxurious interior of JAAN, atop Swissôtel The Stamford. PHOTOS: JAAN



## From Sicily with love

Gusto Italiano, a monthly affair celebrating all types of Italian cuisine, returns in February to Gattopardo Ristorante di Mare at 34 Tras Street.

Chef Lino Sauro, also the restaurant's owner, comes from a long line of farmers and grew up working on family farms. His Sicilian cuisine is a testament to his love for fresh food, made from sustainable ingredients.

On Feb 21, be treated to a six-course menu specially crafted for the occasion, paired with the elegant and intensely aromatic Tuscan wines from Frescobaldi.

HSBC Cardholders enjoy 20 per cent off all Gusto Italiano events. Throughout the year, they will also enjoy 15 per cent off a la carte food bills at monthly participating restaurants.

For reservations, visit [www.gustoitaliano.com.sg](http://www.gustoitaliano.com.sg), or call 6319-4038.



## Four hands to clap

4 Hands Kitchen is a monthly celebration of chef collaborations, and February's edition will feature star chefs from Spain and Sweden.

Hosted at Esquina at 16 Jiak Chuan Road from Feb 25 to March 1, its executive chef Carlos Montobbio will be welcoming the Swedish founder of Bhoga Restaurant, Chef Gustav Knutsson.

Chef Montobbio is only 30, but he has amassed more than 15 years of culinary experience, making him an expert in Spanish and Catalan flavours. Chef Knutsson boasts a Michelin star and prides his New Nordic cuisine on top-quality seasonal ingredients.

At 4 Hands Kitchen, the two chefs will present a contemporary style of cooking with seasonal produce. Citi Cardmembers enjoy 20 per cent off the 4 Hands Kitchen menu while Citi Prestige Cardmembers also receive exclusive dining privileges.

Visit [www.4handskitchen.com.sg](http://www.4handskitchen.com.sg) for reservations.



Chef Westaway's cuisine celebrates contemporary British cuisine with a modern flair.



# A taste of true Brit

## February's Visa Infinite Gourmet is a dynamic showcase of British cuisine

Visa Infinite Gourmet, a monthly dining extravaganza to celebrate fine culinary experiences, will return in February at JAAN.

An intimate restaurant that houses only 40 diners at a time, JAAN offers the best in contemporary British cuisine — it was even awarded its first Michelin star last year. Its executive chef is none other than Mr Kirk Westaway, who has won a slew of awards, including the S. Pellegrino Young Chef 2015 for South-east Asia.

Drawing inspiration from both his English heritage and training stints with renowned chefs all over the world, Chef Westaway has reinvented JAAN's menu over the last three years. With a passion for premium produce, his style of cooking focuses on elevating the natural flavours of each ingredient, allowing for a modern but refreshing take on classic dishes.

### An inviting experience

JAAN offers classy cuisine and an ambience to go along with it. The restaurant's sophisticated interior features an elegant private dining room for exclusive

events, along with a statement Murano crystal and silver free-form chandelier that spans the entire length of the ceiling.

Those dining with Visa Infinite Gourmet will savour the specially crafted menu by Chef Westaway, paired exclusively with the champagnes of Nicolas Feuillatte.

The mellow but refined flavours of British cuisine will blend with the aromatic, toasty notes of the bubbly.

Visa Infinite Cardmembers get 20 per cent off, while other Visa Cardmembers will enjoy 15 per cent off all Visa Infinite Gourmet events.

### VISA INFINITE GOURMET

**When:** Feb 20

**Where:** JAAN at Swissôtel The Stamford, 2 Stamford Road

**Admission:** \$278.40++ (Visa Infinite Cards), \$295.80++ (all other Visa Cards), \$348.00++ (other payment modes)

**Info:** <https://visagourmet.sg/> or call 6319-2153



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# FORUM

## muel's TAKE

### Struggle with 3m-long snake outside Tang Plaza

Earlier, before Mister Python was taken away:



## Include mother tongue language books as part of baby gift pack

As a parent of two young children, I have been a happy recipient of the National Library Board's (NLB) baby gift pack.

The books provided a wonderful introduction to the world of reading, and I thoroughly enjoy the time spent with my children reading them.

In particular, I would like to commend the decision to include books with local elements, such as I Can by Ben Lai, in the gift pack.

It is fun and enriching for children to be able to relate the illustrations in the book with actual scenes in Singapore.

However, I noticed that all the books given in the pack are in English.

Given that there has always been a strong emphasis on bilingualism in Singapore, it is important to introduce mother tongue to children at a young age, and a good way to get started is to expose

them to books in their mother tongue.

Research has found mental and social benefits to bilingualism, such as building the brain's executive system, increasing focus and creativity as well as building social bonds.

Therefore, I would like to encourage NLB to consider including books in mother tongue languages as part of the baby gift pack.

Perhaps during the registration process for the gift pack, NLB can ask parents if they would prefer replacing one of the English books with a book in their mother tongue language.

Leung Chi Ching (Dr)

## Is IB a better fit for S'pore students?

The Singapore students who aced the International Baccalaureate (IB) exam must be congratulated (Why Singapore students consistently ace IB exam; Jan 21).

According to British newspaper The Telegraph, there is a general acceptance that 35 points in the IB is equivalent to an AAA score in the A levels in Britain, and 40 points to A\*A\*A\* (there is no A\* grade for A-level H2 subjects in Singapore).

Based on this standard, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) achieved an 80 per cent distinction rate for all subjects, when 357 out of 444 of its students

scored more than 40 points in the IB, compared with Raffles Institution's 46.3 per cent distinction rate, where students scored distinctions for four of their H2 subjects in the A levels.

Without taking away credit from the students who put in hard work at the IB, this disparity makes me wonder if the IB route is easier than Singapore's A levels.

However, since 2006, Singapore's GCE A-level examinations have been delinked from the United Kingdom examinations, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken greater

control of these national examinations, so the Singapore A-level results cannot be accurately compared with IB results as there is no conversion table.

Nonetheless, as the IB is based on international standards and a larger percentage of students seems to be doing well based on its syllabus, it makes me wonder if MOE is setting too high a standard for the A levels here.

Hence, will IB be a better fit for all Singapore students? Will MOE consider getting more schools to offer the IB programme?

Ivan Goh

## Don't underestimate China's ambition

As an established academic and a seasoned diplomat, Mr Kishore Mahbubani's views on China's ambition reflect an expectation that the country will be a benign superpower. In his recent article, he appears to be simply describing China's inevitable rise without bringing up any caveats on what could possibly go wrong (How the US and China can avoid war; Jan 27).

China's disregard of the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention in the South China Sea and its unilateral action in setting up an air defence identification zone in the

East China Sea are already wake-up calls to all countries of what is likely to happen if China were to become a superpower.

The day may come when China uses its military power to coerce smaller countries to succumb to its wishes, and it does not take much to imagine that countries in Asia may eventually become China's vassal states.

Let us all hope that when China becomes the world's No. 1 superpower, it will also be a benign hegemony.

Roy Goh Hin Soon

### FORUM ONLINE

#### 1. DR YIK KENG YEONG:

Impossible to highlight all possible medical outcomes.

#### 2. JASDEEP SANDHU:

S'pore art community able to take on world stage on its own.

#### 3. HUA TYE SWEE:

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# Include patients, employees, employers in fight against antibiotics overuse

The growing resistance to antibiotics among patients, from misuse and overuse, will eventually lead to the need for more powerful and toxic antibiotics, which are already in decreasing supply and also facing increasing resistance from different types of bacteria. This phenomenon is already being forewarned by both the World Health Organisation and the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. Having lived in London for the

past eight years, I have become accustomed to the medical practice there. Patients with the common cold or flu are encouraged to simply stay home and rest, or visit the pharmacy for basic medication to deal with any uncomfortable symptoms. Visits to GPs are discouraged as these conditions cannot be treated. Only rest is needed. Furthermore, most UK employers I know do not require employees to produce medical

certificates if they are unwell and wish to stay at home to recuperate. There is a high degree of trust that goes both ways – employees are responsible for not exposing their colleagues to contagious symptoms, and employers understand that a few days of rest are required for unwell employees to be more productive in the long run. Unwell employees are trusted to use their own judgment if they require a day or two of rest at home. Here in Singapore, both public

and private hospitals have already introduced antimicrobial stewardship programmes. But it strikes me that the need for stewardship and responsibility should also extend to patients, employees and employers. Critically, general practitioners who are incentivised to satisfy patients insisting on antibiotics, or who stand to profit from selling more drugs to their patients, need to be engaged. **Jacqueline Lim Hsiu Mei (Ms)**

## New law will be tighter on moneylending

We thank Mr Billy Lee for his letter (Can remittance companies lend money?; Jan 18). Remittance companies are currently licensed under the Money-changing and Remittance Businesses Act. This law regulates licensees for their money-changing and remittance activities, primarily to mitigate the risks of money-laundering and terrorism financing. In the past year, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) has been alerted to a remittance licensee offering consumer loans. It is not the intent of MAS to allow remittance licensees to conduct

consumer lending. If licensees wish to do more, they must hold the appropriate licence and be subject to the relevant regulatory measures. We have explained to Mr Lee that when the new Payment Services Bill (PSB) comes into force later this year, licensees under the PSB will be prohibited from conducting consumer lending. Remittance companies that are currently conducting consumer lending will have to cease such activities by the time they are licensed under the PSB. **Jerome Lee** Director (Corporate Communications) Monetary Authority of Singapore

## S'pore art scene bigger than one art fair

I wonder why Mr Jeffrey Say Seck Leong and Mr Lin Fangjie seem to hold Art Stage as the barometer of health of the art scene in Singapore (Learn lessons from Art Stage fair cancellation, Jan 28; and Singapore's visual arts reputation needs salvaging, Jan 28). Why are we so quick to accept pronouncements of a commercial entity that is clearly uninvested in our future without critically examining the premise of those statements? While I agree that Art Stage has

been Singapore's anchor art event for a number of years, I fail to understand the obsession over a commercial art fair. Surely the Singapore art scene is bigger than a single art fair. Art purely for commerce's sake is not sustainable without a corresponding growth in artistic production. We can have an art scene without an art fair, we cannot have an art scene without artists and art. While our scene may not be considered ripe for cherry-picking

by one commercial entity, it does not mean it is stagnating. I see a very different picture, I observe increasing interest and curiosity in art. I was personally involved in two talks held during Singapore Art Week 2019 and was heartened to see many new faces and young people in the audience. Many foreign visitors who came last week have also said that the programmes collectively offered by our museums, galleries, and independent art spaces this year

were infinitely more interesting than the spotlight on a single fair. Just because visitorship and engagement cannot be translated into measurable sales, would it be reasonable to conclude that the scene is not growing? What is the hurry? Why the fixation on Art Basel and Hong Kong? Organic growth in an art scene begins with education and the transmission of knowledge, it does not rest with the proliferation of art fairs. There is no shortcut here. Our expectations have to be more realistic. **Patricia Chen Meng Hui (Ms)**

## Spore's visual arts scene robust, well supported

We refer to the recent letters on Singapore's visual arts scene (Govt agencies must manage art scene better, Jan 21; Learn lessons from Art Stage fair cancellation, Jan 28; and Singapore's visual arts reputation needs salvaging, Jan 28), as well as the column (The art of growing the market; Jan 27) and thank the writers for their views. Singapore has thrived as an open economy which welcomes the global inflow of talents and ideas so as to constantly innovate and improve. If we are too risk-averse and only seek a guarantee of success, we will miss out on opportunities and new possibilities. As recent as their Jan 1 press release on their website, Art Stage

Singapore gave no indication of the possibility of cancelling their fair. While we understand that this was a commercial decision, we are disappointed with the cancellation, and at such short notice at that – nine days before its planned opening. Naturally, exhibitors, partners and collectors who had planned to take part in the fair were impacted by this. Nonetheless, we were heartened to see many local galleries, and the larger art community and beyond, come forward to support affected exhibitors – in particular, non-profit organisation Art Outreach, which organised The ARTery, the pop-up platform that showcased 14 galleries.

Our longstanding efforts to develop the art ecosystem in Singapore have established the vibrant and resilient visual arts sector we enjoy today – with diverse cultural institutions, non-profit groups, an active art community, and a growing marketplace. Central to this success has been the close partnerships between public, private and people sectors to build capabilities as well as cultivate audiences and patrons – all backed by steady investment over the years. Our arts calendar also includes year-round museum exhibitions, shows at art galleries and independent art spaces, as well as residencies and ground-up initiatives by artists and groups.

The National Arts Council, supported by the Singapore Tourism Board and the Economic Development Board, will continue to raise awareness of Singapore's visual art offerings, and strengthen our home-grown capabilities for art market development. We believe Singapore's visual arts scene is robust and well supported today. **Linda De Mello (Ms)** Director, Sector Development (Visual Arts) National Arts Council **Serene Tan (Ms)** Director, Arts and Cultural Precincts Singapore Tourism Board **Cindy Koh (Ms)** Director, Consumer Economic Development Board

## Bouquets

### Thank you for the help

I must thank the kind Singaporeans who came to the aid of my 81-year-old mother when she took a fall recently. On Sunday, while walking along the pathway of Block 267 Serangoon Avenue 3, outside McDonald's, she tripped on the uneven flooring and fell. As she struggled to sit up, a group of teenagers rushed to her aid and tried to use tissues to stop the bleeding from a cut on her forehead. But the bleeding just would not stop. A young couple came by and took control of the situation. The man immediately put her into his car while the woman googled for a nearby clinic that was open on Sundays. They sent her to One Doctors at Nex and the doctor there attended to her immediately. After six stitches and some injections, she is fine and now recovering at home. Throughout the whole episode, my mother was in a state of panic and did not get the names of all the kind people who came to her aid. My family and my mum sincerely thank these kind people. **Stacey Ow Yeong (Ms)**

### IPS has outdone itself

The Institute of Policy Studies has outdone itself this year with Singapore Perspectives. Ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh started by highlighting "the water on the table". We thought he was going to deliberate the water issue between Singapore and Malaysia. We chuckled when he went on to indicate that a greener alternative has substituted the plastic bottles of yesteryears. It was a treat to witness the witty sparring between diplomat and former foreign minister George Yeo, negotiator Prof Koh, and historian Wang Gungwu – all highly distinguished in their fields. When they rejected one person's opinion, as in the case of whether China beholds soft diplomacy, they did so diplomatically without injuring the emotional comfort of that person, instead motivating him to furnish more substantive details in retort. These masters illustrated how to disagree with class, respect and graciousness, so as to produce a healthy and productive divergence. **Lily Ong (Madam)**

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ST PHOTO: ALAN LIM

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# C| BUSINESS



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## Eyeing promising players to boost growth

**Technology fuels new industries even as it gives life to old ones, reports Aw Cheng Wei**

Singapore is on a mission to court technology mavens to drive foreign investment and create higher-quality jobs, as it strives to be a digital hub in the region.

The chief suitor is the Economic Development Board (EDB), which is eyeing advanced manufacturers and tech start-ups that want to expand in the region.

Even old-timers such as the agriculture sector are given a second look, as technology has made it more viable in Singapore.

But foreign tech start-ups looking to expand into South-east Asia rank high on EDB's wish list, as it plans

and executes Singapore's business and investment strategies.

Said its managing director Chng Kai Fong in an interview last month: "I'm trying to bring in the next Google, Facebook, Alibaba – people who think of Asean as a market."

"I want to be able to facilitate their entry so that they set up their first presence in Singapore."

Mr Chng's aim is to create an environment that will coax Asean companies or the Asean group to do business with the world via Singapore.

The signs are promising, as Singapore has attracted regional start-ups to set up shop here, he said, citing the example of Indonesia's Gojek, a ride-hailing digital platform.

With advanced manufacturers, the focus is to create higher-quality jobs for Singaporeans, even as the

### READ MORE

• New face of manufacturing C2

• Why Singapore draws start-ups here C2



EDB strives to bring in as much foreign investment as before.

The focus now is much more on the types of jobs and their value, rather than just the number of jobs the foreign investor can create, said Mr Chng.

Latest figures show Singapore at-

tracted \$9.4 billion in fixed asset investments in 2017, a sum that lies within its forecast of \$8 billion to \$10 billion.

Technological advances have also given new life to sectors such as agriculture.

"Suddenly the economics start to make sense for stuff that didn't use to make sense," said Mr Chng.

"We never thought that agriculture would be viable in Singapore." But it "makes a lot more sense now as intensive, high-rise farming taps artificial intelligence to optimise growing conditions", he added.

The Straits Times looks at three promising players: tech start-ups, advanced manufacturers and agritech companies.

awcw@sph.com.sg



WOOLING FIRMS

**I'm trying to bring in the next Google, Facebook, Alibaba – people who think of Asean as a market. I want to be able to facilitate their entry so that they set up their first presence in Singapore.**



**MR CHNG KAI FONG**, Economic Development Board managing director, on the investors he wants to woo.



Mr David Tan runs CrowdFarmX, a digital platform that lets farmers monitor their farms anywhere in the world with their smartphones. With blockchain technology, they can sell their products without a middleman. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

### Agritech companies

## Local firms set to reap harvests of high-tech farming

A Singapore firm is using advanced technology to grow vegetables in clean rooms, housed in the country's largest indoor farming facility.

Called VertiVegies, the 2ha vertical farm in Lim Chu Kang can produce up to six tonnes of greens a day when it is fully operational by early next year.

Another home-grown high-tech company in the agritech industry is Netatech.

It has created digital platform CrowdFarmX that uses blockchain technology to connect farmers directly to the global market, doing away with the need for a middleman.

These two businesses are among an emerging group of companies giving a boost to Singapore's agritech industry and, in turn, its food security.

It is significant as local farms produce only 8 per cent of vegetables

consumed here.

On average, a Singaporean ate 95kg of leafy vegetables in 2011, according to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority website.

VertiVegies, in a tie-up with Chinese farming company SananBio, applies artificial intelligence and data analytics to grow local favourites such as xiao bai cai, nai bai and cabbage.

Said Mr Veera Sekaran, one of its two directors: "We are going to be growing a lot of local and temperate vegetables."

"We are mindful that we need to feed the local population." The vegetables will be grown with the hydroponic method, using mostly recycled water and no soil, he said.

Support for agritech farming was underlined last month when Economic Development Board managing director Chng Kai Fong said ad-



Mr Veera Sekaran of VertiVegies, which grows vegetables in clean rooms housed in Singapore's largest indoor farming facility. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

vances in technology have made agriculture viable in Singapore.

Earlier this month, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon said at an agritech conference that Singapore has the "right ingredients" to become the urban agriculture hub in the region, as it has a climate for innovation, a strong talent base and a strategic location.

With data analytics and engineer-

ing, VertiVegies has developed computer programs that can set parameters, such as how much light and nutrients plants receive, and clean rooms' temperatures. Said Mr Veera: "We can grow more than 100 varieties of vegetables."

Food security is uppermost in the mind of Mr David Tan, who runs CrowdFarmX.

The twin trends of more people, including farmers and their chil-

dren, moving to cities, and the growing global population mean food shortages are fast becoming a reality, he said.

Using cloud technology, CrowdFarmX lets farmers monitor their farms anywhere in the world with their smartphones.

Through smart contracts built on blockchain technology, they can sell their products in the market without a middleman.

Mr Tan also brings farmers from South-east Asian countries here, where they team up with locals to learn how to run a high-tech farm.

"With technology, yields can go up as much as 10 times," he said.

He has a 1ha model farm in Neo Tiew Lane, in Lim Chu Kang.

There, Mr Tan shows the farmers how to use technology to improve their farming methods and processes.

"The aim of CrowdFarmX is to use less energy, less water, less manpower and less land to produce more," he said.

He has trained about 10 farmers at no cost, but each of them has to pass on the knowledge to three others.

"As more people learn how to run high-tech farms and have access to the market, hopefully the farmers' lives can improve," he added.

**Aw Cheng Wei**

### FOOD SECURITY

**We are going to be growing a lot of local and temperate vegetables. We are mindful that we need to feed the local population.**



**MR VEERA SEKARAN**, a director of VertiVegies, which applies artificial intelligence and data analytics to grow vegetables.

### SMART FARMING

**The aim of CrowdFarmX is to use less energy, less water, less manpower and less land to produce more. As more people learn how to run high-tech farms and have access to the market, hopefully the farmers' lives can improve.**



**MR DAVID TAN**, who runs digital platform CrowdFarmX.



# Healthy business outlook for 2019, two surveys find

## Smaller firms keen to expand overseas, big players post record-breaking profits

**Ng Jun Sen**  
Business Correspondent

Business is on a high for companies across the corporate landscape, with smaller firms keen to expand overseas while the big players reap ever higher profits.

The rosy picture was outlined in

two reports, released on Tuesday, that point to a healthy business outlook for this year, despite an expected slowdown owing to global economic uncertainties.

There was one worrying sign, however, with one of the studies showing that smaller firms are reluctant to digitalise.

A survey of small- and medium-

sized enterprises (SMEs) found that 38 per cent said they expect to expand their businesses this year.

Around half of them intend to venture overseas, many for the first time. These tend to be small firms with revenues below \$1 million and fewer than 50 employees, said QBE Insurance, which conducted the poll of 491 SMEs.

The findings illustrate the growing appetite of smaller firms to seek opportunities abroad, even though they may lack experience of foreign markets and the re-

sources of bigger companies.

"It indicates their ambition and desire to reach new customers beyond Singapore, where they may find growth more challenging," said QBE chief executive Karl Hamann.

Encouraging firms to internationalise is a key objective of the Government's wide-ranging industry transformation efforts.

While smaller firms are developing a spirit of adventure, their larger cousins are happily rolling in money, another survey showed.

It found that the 1,000 Singapore companies with the largest turnover posted a combined profit of \$210.7 billion from June 2017 to May last year, a 15.3 per cent year-on-year rise.

Combined turnover was \$3.15 trillion, a 13 per cent annual increase, the study by DP Info and EY found.

This was the largest combined profit and turnover in the 32-year history of the Singapore 1,000 ranking produced by both firms, which looked at audited financial data.

In particular, the services, information and communications, and finance sectors experienced strong growth in their combined turnover in the past five years.

Mr James Gothard, general manager of credit services and strategy at consumer credit reporting agency Experian, said the record profit and turnover would continue to provide opportunities for companies to grow and to tap regional opportunities.

DP Info is part of Experian.

Mr Max Loh, EY managing partner for Asean and Singapore, said it is important for companies to focus on creating new business models and improving customer experience, going beyond just identifying technologies to improve traditional processes.

QBE's survey of SMEs, however, found firms are still lagging behind the digital wave.

While 65 per cent of companies polled said they were aware of the Government's support in helping businesses digitalise, only 30 per cent have used it. This highlights a disconnect between awareness and uptake, said QBE.

Around 40 per cent cited the high cost of investment as the primary obstacle to digitalisation.

Mr Hamann said: "While many still show hesitancy towards digitalisation, they should tap resources available to help smoothen their transition to the digital economy."

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## Advanced manufacturers

# Smart 3D printers that disrupt how things are made

**Aw Cheng Wei**

"Let's kill all the suppliers."

That is the mantra of 3D printers that are rendering traditional supply chains obsolete by letting companies print the parts or products they need, whenever they want.

Such high-tech printers save companies the cost and hassle of ordering parts from faraway countries when machines break down.

Some of these printers are smart enough to improve on product designs, when fed the right computer code.

They are the new face of manufacturing.

Gone will be the perception that factory work involves punishing hours in front of heavy machinery, sawing away at wood or metal. Instead, work will be done in clean rooms and laboratories.

Associate Professor Tan Ming Jen, head of the HP-NTU Digital Manufacturing Corporate Lab at Nanyang Technological University said companies have "either implemented some Industry 4.0 technologies or they are going to implement them".

"This is the future direction."

He is referring to how artificial intelligence, robotics and cloud computing are changing manufacturing.

Prof Tan, whose \$84 million laboratory opened last October, said Industry 4.0 lets "computers do everything while humans stay in the background".

For example, machines can be programmed to learn to be sensitive to weather changes and adapt their operations accordingly.

"They can be taught, like with children, to learn and think, and improve on product designs."

The machines can also work all year round, without employers having to "worry about workers going on leave, falling sick or taking coffee breaks", Prof Tan added.

In this new era, humans' role will be "more creative work" from product design to coding. "The machines will replace the repetitive work that we now do," he said.

With 3D printers, companies also need not hold inventory or material because "they can print all sorts of shapes and sizes". For instance, 3D printers can shorten the time airline companies need to repair their damaged aircraft, saving them money, Prof Tan added.

The traditional supply chain of ordering machine parts and having them flown or shipped in slows down the repair process and makes it more expensive, he said.



Left: HP's Mr Rob Mesaros with items that have been produced using a 3D printer, for example, a turbine model, an orthotic slipper and a prosthetic arm. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Below: Associate Professor Tan Ming Jen with a 3D robotic concrete spray printer that can print concrete. He is studying ways to improve concrete printing. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

Storing inventory at airports is also very costly, he added.

With 3D printers, airlines can make the parts that need to be repaired in one step - "from design to shophouse", he noted.

The printing process is much more environmentally friendly, doing away with the need to saw raw materials into the right shape, said Prof Tan, a materials expert.

State-of-the-art 3D printers spread the material, typically in powder form, followed by nozzles squirting a binding agent to define the shape, layer by layer.

"It's as fast as that. Makers are limited only by their imagination, and they use just the material they need," said Prof Tan.

Among other things, 3D printers are now used to make customised orthotics that people with foot problems can insert into their shoes to correct biomechanical problems that affect how they walk, stand or run.

HP's Mr Rob Mesaros, vice-president of 3D printing and digital manufacturing for Asia-Pacific and

Japan, said his company is working with Prof Tan on new materials for 3D printing, such as tissue cells, improving cyber security to protect networked computers, and developing artificial intelligence for their printers to diagnose and repair themselves when they have problems.

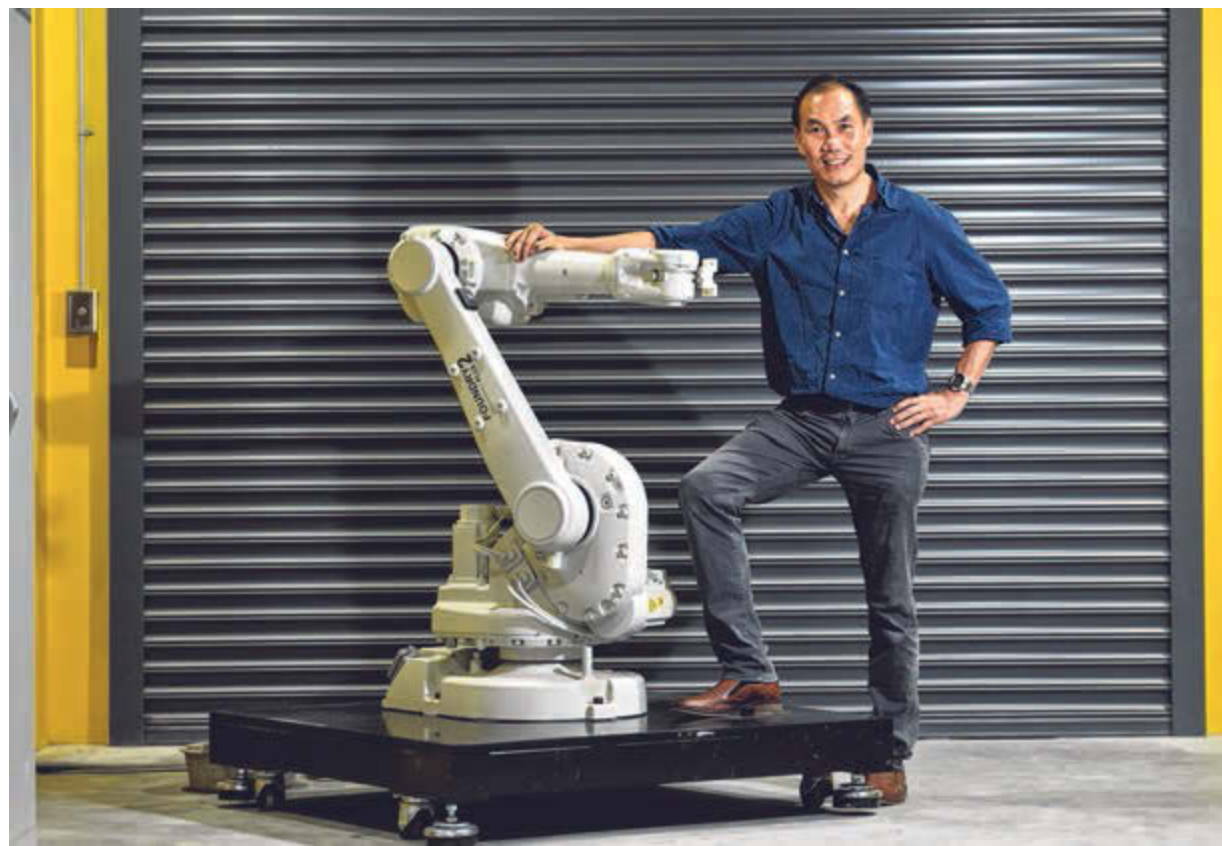
"The global industry today is worth \$5 billion, and as it gets faster, more reliable... the market will expand," Mr Mesaros said.

HP wants to decentralise the manufacturing process to such a small size that micro-companies can use the 3D printers too, he added.

The company, whose printers print plastics and metals, is working with Australian company iOrthotics, among others, to print customised orthotics.

Said Mr Mesaros: "It is the accuracy that is leading to better, personalised outcomes. Whether it is dental alignments, orthotics or implants, all of them benefit extremely from accuracy."

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## Tech start-ups

# Entrepreneurs drawn by clear laws, ease of set-up, savvy investors

When Malaysian Kelvin Teo and Indonesian Reynold Wijaya set up crowd-investing website Funding Societies in 2015 in Singapore, both were not on the island.

"My co-founder and I incorporated the company and built a team (of five) here, via the Internet and video calls, without being physically in Singapore," Mr Teo, a Singapore permanent resident, told The Straits Times.

The ease of setting up a company in Singapore and its clear legislations were also highlighted by Ms Caecilia Chu, co-founder and chief executive of YouTrip, a multi-cur-

rency mobile wallet.

Singapore's "clear and specific guidelines" helped her Hong Kong-based company operate properly within regulatory frameworks, said Ms Chu, who is from Hong Kong.

Both tech start-ups are in tune with Singapore's foreign investment strategy, as one of their primary goals is to expand in South-east Asia.

Funding Societies expanded to Indonesia in February 2016, but under the name Modalku, which means "my capital" in Bahasa Indonesia. In February 2017, it entered the Malaysian market.



Crowd-investing website Funding Societies co-founders Kelvin Teo (left) and Reynold Wijaya, and multi-currency mobile wallet YouTrip co-founder and chief executive Caecilia Chu. PHOTOS: FUNDING SOCIETIES, YOUTRIP



The firm connects companies that need loans with investors through a digital platform.

Another factor Ms Chu appreciates is "the constant industry engagement" by government agencies.

Her company took part in the Monetary Authority of Singapore's

public consultation on the new Payment Services Bill, which was passed by Parliament this month.

YouTrip was launched in Singapore last August, in partnership with ez-link and Mastercard.

Its multi-currency mobile wallet allows users to pay in several

currencies.

Another foreign investor that chose to operate in Singapore is Asiakredit.

The reason cited by its co-founder and chief executive Mike Singh is that Singapore "gives us access to fund raising as well as rich

business insights, knowledge and experiences from an extensive venture capital and start-up focused investor network".

Asiakredit operates smartphone app Pera247, a short-term lending service for the Philippine market that lets people borrow money within minutes.

Mr Singh, a Filipino, chose Singapore also because its investor Forum Capital Advisors is located here.

"We work with Forum to develop our business strategy, fund raising, communications and human resource activities," he said.

Mr Teo of Funding Societies expressed the hope that Singapore will continue to build on the "good foundation" it has established.

"We hope it will continuously update the tax code and regulations to keep up with the times, ultimately enabling fintech start-ups, like us, to move into the mainstream."

**Aw Cheng Wei**



A 10 per cent rise in the US dollar against China's currency over the past year has made Apple's products – which compete at the top end of the market – much pricier than rivals. However, Apple has not said in which countries it will adjust iPhone prices. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



# Apple to cut prices of some iPhones outside US

Move to offset impact of rising US dollar is an attempt to stem weak sales of the product

SAN FRANCISCO • Apple plans to cut the price of some of its flagship iPhones for only the second time in the device's 12-year history, pegging its retail value to past prices in local currencies outside the United States, instead of the rising US dollar.

The move is an attempt to stem weak sales of the iPhone, particularly in overseas markets such as China, where a 10 per cent rise in the US dollar over the past year or

so has made Apple's products – which already compete at the top end of the market – much pricier than rivals.

Apple chief executive Tim Cook disclosed the plan on Tuesday after the company reported its first dip in iPhone sales, which occurred during the key holiday shopping period. The company has only once before cut iPhone prices, shortly after it debuted in 2007.

Apple did not say in which coun-

tries it would adjust iPhone prices.

Resellers in China already began cutting iPhone prices earlier this month after Apple lowered its sales forecast for the quarter that ended last month.

The company priced its new iPhone XS, which was released last September, at US\$999 (S\$1,350), the same price in US dollars as its predecessor, 2017's iPhone X.

That worked for US consumers, but in countries such as China and Turkey, the local currency had fallen so much against the surging US dollar, it made the phone significantly pricier than its predecessor a year before.

Apple had essentially asked the consumer to bear the cost of the strengthening dollar.

On Tuesday, Mr Cook said Apple will adjust foreign prices in some markets by resetting them at or close to what they were one year before in local currencies. Effectively, that means Apple will absorb the cost of the strengthening dollar.

"We've decided to go back to (iPhone prices) more commensurate with what our local prices were a year ago, in hopes of helping the sales in those areas," Mr Cook told Reuters.

In the company's quarterly earnings call on Tuesday, Mr Cook also

highlighted the impact of foreign exchange problems in Turkey, where he said the local lira had depreciated by 33 per cent against the dollar and Apple's sales were down by US\$700 million from the previous year.

In November, Apple also cited currency pressure on its prices in Brazil, India and Russia.

Apple has not said when or how often it might reset its prices because of foreign currency changes.

Chief financial officer Luca Maestri said the price adjustments may not extend to its services business, which includes Apple Music and the App Store.

While that unit beat analyst expectations, with US\$10.8 billion in sales in the quarter that ended last month, growth has slowed compared with previous years.

Mr Maestri said slower growth was partly because prices rose for users in non-US markets.

"Roughly 60 per cent of our services business is outside the United States, and, as you know, the US dollar has appreciated in recent months," Mr Maestri said.

REUTERS

## NTUC Income promotes Andrew Yeo to CEO



Mr Andrew Yeo will take up the chief executive position on June 1. He joined Income in 2015.

Insurer NTUC Income has appointed a new chief executive.

Mr Andrew Yeo, the firm's executive vice-president and general manager of its life and health business, will take up the post on June 1, it was announced yesterday.

Mr Yeo will replace Mr Ken Ng, who has been leading NTUC Income since 2013.

Mr Ng, who will take on a new position within NTUC Enterprise to support the executive director, will remain as CEO until June to ensure a smooth transition, NTUC Income said.

Chairman Ronald Ong noted that Mr Yeo had been instrumental in the company's development since he joined in 2015.

"The appointment of Andrew as the internal successor demonstrates the robust efforts that Income has been putting into building internal bench strength and talent," he added.

"Andrew is a prominent member of the management team and is widely recognised by colleagues and industry peers for his business acumen and problem-solving capabilities."

Mr Yeo said that while the operating environment will always pose challenges, the group will continue to leverage technology and new ways of working to be more efficient.

Before joining NTUC Income, Mr Yeo held various leadership positions in insurance firms, including AIA, Prudential and Great Eastern.

He has a bachelor of engineering (first-class honours) from Glasgow University and a graduate diploma in business administration from the Singapore Institute of Management.

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR NOBLE GROUP SHAREHOLDERS

Shareholders of Noble Group Limited ("Old Noble") are entitled, subject to certain restrictions, to receive shares in Noble Group Holdings Limited ("New Noble") following the completion of the restructuring in December 2018.

To receive these shares, shareholders are reminded that they should register via [www.lucid-is.com/nghlregistration](http://www.lucid-is.com/nghlregistration) and await further information.

Old Noble shareholders who hold their shares through a depository agent, custodian or broker are advised to contact and consult their relevant party.

Shareholders must get in touch with Lucid **by no later than 19 December 2019** to receive their shares.

Following the appointment of the provisional liquidator and the completion of the restructuring, it is expected that Old Noble, which no longer holds any material assets or business, will commence a liquidation process. This is a procedural step that will have no impact on the business or financial status of New Noble or the right of Old Noble shareholders to receive their entitlement to New Noble shares prior to 19 December 2019.

If shareholders have questions after visiting the website, they should contact Lucid or B.A.C.S via the contact details below.

Lucid (as holding period trustee) at:	B.A.C.S. (as Singapore share transfer agent) at:
Lucid Issuer Services Limited Tankerton Works, 12 Argyle Walk London WC1H 8HA United Kingdom Attn: Noble team Email: <a href="mailto:nghl@lucid-is.com">nghl@lucid-is.com</a>	B.A.C.S. Private Limited 8 Robinson Road, #03-00 ASO Building Singapore 048544 Telephone: +65 6593 4848 Email: <a href="mailto:main@zicoholdings.com">main@zicoholdings.com</a>



Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

# STI falls as focus turns to trade dramas, Fed meet

## Banks, real estate investment trusts fall, while offshore and marine stocks rise

Lynette Tan

Investors here and across the region seemed more focused on trade dramas and United States interest rate policy than shares yesterday.

The sense of drift sent most markets sideways, although local stocks went into negative territory. The Straits Times Index retreated 0.42 per cent, or 13.31 points, to 3,174.38, with gainers outpacing losers 215 to 166 on trade of 1.4 billion shares worth \$1.17 billion.

DBS Bank led losses, giving up 1.16 per cent to \$23.94, while United Overseas Bank retreated 0.90 per cent to \$25.30 and OCBC Bank shed 0.09 per cent to \$11.39.

A handful of real estate investment trusts (Reits) also headed lower, save for OUE Hospitality Trust, which tacked on 4.32 per cent to 72.5 cents. It posted higher distribution per stapled security for the fourth quarter yesterday.

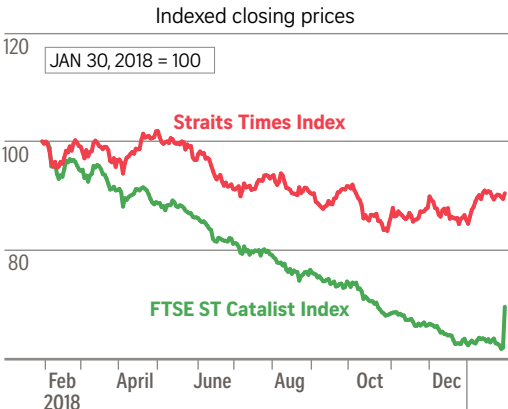
CapitaMall Trust ended the day down 1.67 per cent to \$2.36, Maple-tree Commercial Trust fell 2.23 per cent to \$1.75, and Starhill Global Reit dipped 0.69 per cent to 72 cents.

Cromwell European Reit, which shed 5 per cent on Tuesday after one of its largest investors sold its entire stake, steadied yesterday to close up 1.08 per cent at 47 euro cents.

Brighter spots were found among

Straits Times Index

Jan 30, 2019  
**3,174.38** ↓  
-13.31 (-0.42%)  
Current streak  
**3 days**  
Day high  
**3,194.28**  
Day low  
**3,169.29**  
52-week high  
**3,615.28** (May 2, 2018)  
52-week low  
**2,966.45** (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalist Index

Jan 30, 2019  
**301.67** ↑  
+1.16 (+0.39%)  
Current streak  
**1 day**  
Day high  
**302.02**  
Day low  
**299.60**  
52-week high  
**485.03** (Jan 30, 2018)  
52-week low  
**300.51** (Jan 29, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Jan 30, 2019  
**771.74** ↓  
-2.47 (-0.32%)  
Current streak  
**3 days**  
Day high  
**775.05**  
Day low  
**770.31**  
52-week high  
**868.02** (April 30, 2018)  
52-week low  
**722.91** (Oct 30, 2018)



offshore and marine stocks, which are now taking a breather as crude prices steady. The US government slapped sanctions on Venezuela's state-owned oil firm PdVSA earlier this week, with the move largely expected to ease supply glut worries.

Singapore's three biggest ship-

yard stocks traded mixed. Yangzijiang Shipbuilding gained 3.65 per cent to \$1.42 and Sembcorp Marine put on 0.63 per cent to \$1.60, but Keppel Corp was 0.33 per cent lower at \$6.07.

Investors were keeping a keen eye on high-level US-China trade talks

in Washington. There is apparently willingness to reach some form of deal as US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said he expects significant progress this week.

Yet, US accusations that Chinese telecoms giant Huawei committed theft and bank fraud set a tricky stage for the negotiations. Market observers have noted that the Chinese side has remained fairly silent.

Meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve is set to announce its monetary policy decision. Expectations are for zero Fed hikes this year.

Corporate guidance from technology firms remains one to watch, even as Apple delivered earnings in line with analysts' expectations.

Test-handling machine supplier AEM Holdings rebounded strongly yesterday, especially after Maybank Kim Eng initiated a "buy" on the stock. Shares surged 9.39 per cent to 99 cents.

tanlyn@sph.com.sg

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	272	-4	16443	5.9	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	188	cd	3	20905	4.6
385	298	Capitaland	330	unch	9334	3.6	0.7
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	236	xd	-4	17298	4.9
1359	780	CityDev	903	-9	1872	2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	228	+1	6681	4.6	1.9
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2394	-28	4043	6	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US920	-9	691	2.3	-
136	85.5	Genting Sing	109	unch	35847	3.2	1.7
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-0.5	8474	3.2	0.6
415	231	HPH Trust USD	US25.5	+0.5	4232	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US709	+6	2204	2.8	0.3
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6587	+26	332	2.4	0.7
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3710	-36	227	0.9	0.4
4026	2766	Jardine C&C	3808	+75	722	3	1.8
882	567	Keppel Corp	607	cd	-2	4537	4.9
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1139	-1	2950	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	482	unch	1318	3.7	3.3
826	672	SGX	765	cd	+3	2897	3.9
1184	914	SIA	966	+2	1163	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	246	-6	4675	5.3	1.1
371	319	ST Engineering	366	-2	3653	4.1	5.4
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	160	+1	3725	1.3	1.4
358	283	Singtel	301	-1	15868	6.8	1.7
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	73	cd	-1	20865	0.9
3037	2380	UOB	2530	-23	2962	4	1.2
915	591	UOL	656	-7	1101	2.7	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1630	+37	1394	3.7	2.1
333	297	Wilmar Intl	331	unch	3557	3	1
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+5	31064	3.2	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK		COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST		'VOL	GROSS	P/BV	
HIGH	LOW		TRADED	SALE				+OR-
278	245	Ascendas Reit	272	-4	16443	5.9	1.3	
127	105	Ascott Reit	119	cd	unch	6106	6	1
75.5	59	Bumitama Agri	67	-2	225	1.1	16	
182	143	CDL HTrust	163	cd	+3	2633	-	1.1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	188	cd	-3	20905	4.6	1
385	298	Capitaland	330	unch	9334	3.6	0.7	
240	195	CapitaMall Trust	236	xd	-4	17298	4.9	1.2
169	133	Capillary China Tr	146	+1	1284	6.9	0.9	
1359	780	CityDev	903	-9	1872	2	0.8	
251	196	ComfortDelGro	228	+1	6681	4.6	1.9	
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2394	-28	4043	6	1.4	
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US920	-9	691	2.3	-	
78	59	Far East HTrust	65	+2	5667	-	0.8	
193	150	First Resources	170	-1	1013	4	2.2	
231	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	227	unch	1802	5.3	109.1	
116	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	107	-1	6408	6.4	1.2	
136	85.5	Genting Sing	109	unch	35847	3.2	1.7	
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25.5	-0.5	8474	3.2	0.6	
228	167	GuocoLand Ltd	185	unch	170	3.8	0.5	
415	23	HPH Trust USD	US25.5	+0.5	4232	10.3	0.4	
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US709	+6	2204	2.8	0.3	
6974	1099	JMH USD	US6587	+26	332	2.4	0.7	
4080	3155	JSH USD	US3710	-36	227	0.9	0.4	
4026	2766	Jardine C&C	3808	+75	722	3	1.8	
58	44.5	Kep Infra Tr	51	cd	unch	6838	7.3	1.9
882	567	Keppel Corp	607	cd	-2	4537	4.9	1
130	108	Keppel Reit	118	+2	7619	4.7	0.8	
151	151	MT	206	cd	+1	325	5.4	3.7
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US193	+6	250	1.6	1.4	
180	152	Mapletree Com Tr	175	xd	-4	16836	5.2	1.2
212	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	201	xd	-1	6204	5.8	1.4
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	136	-1	8744	5.6	1.2	
127	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	124	cd	unch	16643	6	0.9
73	73	NetLink NBN Tr	78.5	+1	9487	-	1	
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1139	-1	2950	3.2	1.2	
215	136	OUE	153	+4	849	2	0.3	
92.5	64.5	OUE HTTrust	72.5	cd	+3	2634	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl	186	-1	263	4	1	
59	28	Oxley	30	+0.5	1298	5	0.9	
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	283	cd	+3	1026	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	111	unch	514	2	2.6	
564	455	SATS	482	unch	1318	3.7	3.3	
826	672	SGX	765	cd	+3	2897	3.9	9.6
1184	914	SIA	966	+2	1163	4.1	0.8	
337	220	SIA Engineering	250	unch	95	5.2	1.9	
292	231	SPH	246	-6	4675	5.3	1.1	
105	98	SPHREIT	103	+1	599	5.4	1.1	
371	319	ST Engineering	366	-2	3653	4.1	5.4	
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	257	-3	4336	19	0.7	
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	160	+1	3725	1.3	1.4	
58	39	Silverlake Axis	47	+4	17253	6.4	6.8	
147	88.5	SingPost	97.5	-0.5	1918	3.6	1.3	
358	283	Singtel	301	-1	15868	6.8	1.7	
296	158	StarHub	179	-1	1899	8.9	5.5	
77.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	72	cd	-0.5	2925	6.3	0.8
209	163	Suntec Reit	189	cd	-6	14949	5.3	0.9
92.5	57.5	ThaiBev	73	cd	-1	20865	0.9	3.6
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.9	+0.4	126945	-	2.9	
3037	2380	UOB	2530	-23	2962	4	1.2	
915	591	UOL	656	-7	1101	2.7	0.6	
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1630	+37	1394	3.7	2.1	
333	297	Wilmar Intl	331	unch	3557	3	1	
243	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	359	3.9	0.5	
162	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	+5	31064	3.2	1	
188	116	Yanlord Land	127	-1	3200	5.4	0.5	

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	138	+1	182	7.5	1
70	48	Accordia Golf Tr	53.5	unch	379	7.2	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	84.5	+1	2218	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	107	unch	3085	5.7	1.2
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13	+0.1	1694	50	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	58.5	unch	353	17	0.8
281	115	Best World	274	+7	1555	1.5	9.8
85.5	76	Boustead	79	-0.5	110	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87	+1	47	8	2.3
653	521	Bukit Sembawang	566	+3	33	3.2	1.2
88	65.5	Cache Log Trust	72 cd	-0.5	3371	8.2	1.1
53	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	901	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	114	+2	978	3.9	1
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	37	+1.5	610	1.3	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	128	+3	1249	2.3	1.4
104	64	Chip Eng Seng	69	unch	511	5.8	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	36.5	+1.5	11146	-	1.6
700	302	Delong	588	unch	4	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20 cd	unch	223	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	72	unch	197	8.4	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	52	unch	3097	7.4	1.1
142	92	First Reit	106	-2	1334	8.1	1
148	134	Fraser's Com Tr	148	+1	4209	6.5	0.9
82	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	72.5	unch	607	-	0.9
26.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	20	+0.4	1622	5	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78	-0.5	30	2.9	2.4
68	52	Health Mgt Intl	54.5	unch	25	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	94	+4.5	8304	26.6	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	262	+1	27	5	0.6
81.5	71	IREIT Global	74	unch	55	8	1
40.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	22	unch	110	-	0.3
83	43	Japfa	81.5	+0.5	2164	0.6	1.5
80	49	KSH	52	unch	17	4.2	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	69.5 cd	+0.5	1542	8.9	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	143 xd	-2	5324	5.1	1.3
189	132	Keppel T&T	187	-1	88	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	85	unch	8454	-	1
78.5	44.5	Lian Beng	49	-0.5	165	4.6	0.4
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	23.5	unch	7883	14.6	0.9
53	30	MM2 Asia	32	unch	399	-	1.8
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	85	+1.5	2604	6.5	0.8
120	95	Metro	99	unch	80	5.1	0.6
26	5	Noble	81	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	49	unch	2424	9.5	0.6
67	54	PEC	58	-	-	3.4	0.6
46	17	POSH	18.1	+0.1	38	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	49	-0.5	242	3.3	3.5
115	55.5	QAF Ltd	68	unch	43	7.4	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	113	-2	186	2	3.7
55	22	SIIC Environment	33.5	+0.5	314	-	0.6
45	38	Sabana Reit	42 cd	+0.5	390	7.6	0.7
119	90	Sheng Siong	110	+1	498	3	6.1
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	5.9	+1.2	11679	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	59.5	-0.5	669	8.9	0.9
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	83.5	+0.5	210	-	0.7
48.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	40	unch	1221	1.5	0.5
136	54	UMS	63.5	+2	4854	7.9	1.5
112	58.5	Valuetronics	70	+1.5	3678	6.5	160.3
16.1	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.1	+0.2	5140	-	0.3
51	24	Yoma Strategic	33	-1	4092	0.8	0.9
35	16.1	Yongnam	17.6	-0.1	46	-	0.3



# M1 takeover bid leaves Malaysia's Axiata in a bind

Wireless giant has less than three weeks to decide whether to exit decade-long investment in telco

Malaysian wireless giant Axiata Group is caught in a bind as it weighs whether to exit its decade-long investment in Singapore operator M1. Axiata, M1's biggest shareholder, has less than three weeks left to decide whether to tender its stock into a takeover offer valuing the target at \$1.9 billion. The Malaysian company held a board meeting last week to discuss

the merits of the bid from Keppel Corp and Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), according to sources. Axiata sees that there is not enough time left to pull together its own counteroffer, the sources said. The Malaysian company also considers it unlikely that a rival bidder will emerge at this point, one source said. Still, Axiata plans to wait until close to the Feb 18 deadline before making a final decision to accept the offer, the source said, asking not to be identified because the information is private. Ultimately, Axiata may have little choice as to which path to take. Keppel and SPH have a waiver

from the Singapore bourse, allowing them to take M1 private if the free float falls below 10 per cent. If Axiata rejects the offer, it could get stuck holding 28.7 per cent of an unlisted company languishing in last place among Singapore's wireless carriers. Keppel and SPH, which hold a combined 32.8 per cent of M1, said last week that they will not increase their bid of \$2.06 per share "under any circumstances whatsoever." They extended the closing date for the offer by two weeks to Feb 18, giving investors more time to consider tendering their shares. "Given the sensitivity of the tim-

ing of the situation, and that whatever we state may unnecessarily influence the market or be misconstrued, we will not be commenting," Axiata said in a statement in response to queries. Axiata management has already had a first chance to say what it thinks of the offer. Last week, M1 board members urged investors to accept the current offer after an independent financial adviser declared the terms "fair and reasonable". Axiata chief executive Jamaludin Ibrahim, the Malaysian company's representative on the M1 board, was among the independent directors recommending the offer. Things were looking a lot rosier for Axiata just a couple of years ago, when it was working with M1's two other major holders to solicit bids for the company. At the time, M1 attracted interest from China Broadband Capital, Chinese coal miner Shanxi Meijin Energy Co and Singapore Internet provider MyRepublic. The plan was abandoned four months later after potential suitors dropped out. BLOOMBERG



Both Nissan and its former chairman Carlos Ghosn have been indicted in Tokyo for under-reporting Ghosn's income. Nissan is also under probe by the United States Securities and Exchange Commission on whether the carmaker accurately disclosed executive pay. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



## First drop in car sales since 2009 adds to Nissan woes

Global deliveries fell 2.8 per cent last year to 5.7 million vehicles, the Japan-based carmaker said in a statement yesterday.

TOKYO • Nissan Motor reported its first slide in auto sales in almost a decade, adding to the challenges the company faces following the arrest of former chairman Carlos Ghosn in Japan for alleged financial misconduct. Global deliveries fell 2.8 per cent last year to 5.7 million vehicles, the Japan-based carmaker said in a statement yesterday. The last time Nissan had a slump was in 2009. By comparison, rival Toyota Motor showed a 2 per cent increase and Volkswagen reported a 0.9 per cent gain for last year. While carmakers worldwide have been struggling with China, the largest market, contracting for the first time in more than two

decades, Nissan's woes were compounded by the fallout since Ghosn's arrest on Nov 19 and prolonged detention. Both the company and the executive have been indicted in Tokyo for under-reporting his income, threatening to unravel the world's biggest auto alliance – of Nissan, Renault and Mitsubishi Motors – he helped engineer. Nissan, which is due to announce its earnings for the quarter through last month on Feb 12, is also under probe by financial regulator, the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, on whether the carmaker accurately disclosed executive pay. BLOOMBERG

### Interbank currency rates

Jan 30				
Currencies	Against \$	Offer	Against US\$	Offer
	Bid		Bid	
SF/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9720	0.9728	0.7195	0.7197
Canadian dollar	1.0193	1.0202	0.7548	0.7549
Euro	1.5439	1.5454	1.1429	1.1433
NZ dollar	0.9246	0.9256	0.6844	0.6848
Sterling pound	1.7658	1.7673	1.3071	1.3075
US dollar	1.3509	1.3517	-	-
SF/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.1248	20.1419	14.8974	14.9011
Danish kroner	20.6835	20.6989	15.3109	15.3132
Hong Kong dollar	17.222	17.23	12.7478	12.7486
Indian Rupee	190	190	14037	14039
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	12356	12365	0.9147	0.9147
Korean won	0.1209	0.1210	0.0895	0.0895
Malaysian ringgit	32.85	32.91	24.3191	24.3487
New Taiwan dollar	4.3802	4.3971	32.498	32.530
Philippine peso	15.8866	15.9053	11.7620	11.7659
Saudi riyal	25.4903	25.5828	19.100	19.1068
Saudi riyal	36.0182	36.0424	26.6624	26.6645
Swedish krona	14.8753	14.8890	1.0114	1.01150
Swiss franc	135.5781	135.6856	100.3613	100.3814
Thai Baht	4.2995	4.3048	3.1827	3.1847



# OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES  
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

**Ghale Aave Nanka Sade Uthi Jaye**



**Nehal Kaur w/o late Margat Singh**  
Village: Jawahar Singh Wala  
passed away peacefully on 30 January 2019.  
*Behbeh will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by her loved ones.*

**Children:**  
Balwant Kaur  
Jit Kaur  
Awtar Singh  
Sukhbeer Kaur  
Harjit Singh  
Harbans Singh  
Darshan Singh (Nephew)

**Spouses:**  
Manjit Singh  
Sohan Singh Brar (deceased)  
Amarjit Kaur  
Gurdip Singh Sanghera  
Mary Ann Braga  
Jaswinder Kaur  
Dalip Kaur

**Grandchildren and Spouses:**  
Iqbal & Emma  
Shirin & Piyush  
Gursharon & Amritpal  
Kiran & Hedley  
Jaspal & Reshvin  
Harpreet & Frank

**Great-grandchildren:**  
Anyia, Samir, Esha, Aiden, Arya, Arshiya, Hana


Buses will leave from Khalsa Dharmak Sabha at 3.30pm on 31 January 2019 for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 5.00pm.

Akhand Path prayers will be held on 1 February 2019 at Khalsa Dharmak Sabha from 2.00pm.

Path da Bhog and Kirtan on 2 February 2019 from 12.00pm to 2.00pm.

The family wishes to express their heartfelt thanks to relatives, friends and the dedicated staff of Assisi Hospice (St Mark Ward).

**65th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory Of**



**SHANTIMAA**  
Wife of Late Manchharam Nagindas  
Left for heavenly abode on 31st January 1954

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Always fondly remembered by  
Manchharam Nagindas Family

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**



**DANYAL HARITZ BIN SELAMAT**  
19.03.1999 - 31.12.2018  
*Danyal's family would like to thank all relatives, friends & everyone who has shared his precious life.*  
Dearly missed  
Mum and Dad

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Loving wife, doting mother and friend



**Leong Wee Teen**  
Departed 31 January 2014

*"High King of Heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all!"*

Always cherished by Joy, Ann and Lawrence Boo

*"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8*



**Joseph Tay Him Yong**  
Age: 90  
Was called home to the Lord on 30 January 2019. Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.  
Wife: Lim Chew Hwee

**Children:**  
Tay Li Ling  
Tay Chee Wee  
Daniel Tay Chee Kwang  
David Tay Chee Siang

**Spouses:**  
Lim Boon Phock  
Chew Nee Chng  
Patricia Lim Teck Kiang  
Jaslyn Lee Mui Koon

**Grandsons:**  
Eric Lim Kok Yong  
Edwin Lim Kok Hao  
Darius Bryant Tay Zyn Chong  
Darrell Dickson Tay Teck Seng

**Granddaughters:**  
Geraldine Tay Qi Tong  
Lavinia Tay Sze Hua  
Annabel Tay Yi Qing  
Joey Tay Hui Qin


Wake is held at St Joseph Dying Aid Association, Oratory prayer room 2, 100 Hougang Avenue 8, (S)538790.  
Night prayers on Thursday 31 January 2019 (English) and Friday 1 February 2019 (Teochew).

Cortege will leave on Saturday 2 February 2019 at 1.45pm for Funeral Mass at Church of the Nativity of the B.V.M. at 2.00pm, thereafter for cremation at Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 at 3.30pm.

**2nd Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of**



**Molly Khoo Lai Wah**  
Departed on 31 January 2017  
Dearly missed and cherished by husband Andrew Tan, children, grandchildren, great grandchild and all loved ones.



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The life of Frank MacKenzie A knees-up and tribute will be held On Sat 23 Feb 2019 At Neutral Bay, Sydney. For details pls email reframeck@gmail.com  
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Ralph Waldo Emerson

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# BAR SET HIGH FOR NEW BOSS AT THE HUB

Insiders say CEO, preferably a local, must be skilled in balancing social and business objectives

David Lee

Wanted: A chief executive officer with the ability to “fundamentally integrate” both the commercial and social roles of the Singapore Sports Hub and, preferably, a local.

As the \$1.33 billion public-private partnership casts its net globally for a CEO, following Monday’s shock announcement of incumbent Oon Jin Teik’s departure in April, some members of the sports fraternity here acknowledged that the task will not be easy.

Said an industry insider, who declined to be named: “The new CEO should ideally be Singaporean or based here for some time and knows the local environment and ecosystem well. He should understand the Sports Hub’s role in Singapore society, and how to work with key local stakeholders.

“It would also be best if he comes from the private sector because the commercial mindset is important to make his stint successful as he

sets about to fill the calendar, attract events and get the best deals.”

Koh Ching Ching, head of group brand and communications at OCBC, the Hub’s Premier Founding Partner, noted that the new CEO needs to make the Sports Hub a world-class “beacon for Singaporeans as well as overseas markets”.

She added: “We all want the Singapore Sports Hub to be a global sports and entertainment hub; that is why it is configured as a commercial project – to optimise the absorption of the best practices and talent.

“At the same time, the Sports Hub serves the local community by hosting essential grassroots programmes and activities.

“We would look to the new CEO to fundamentally integrate both interests and be able to fashion successful engagements for both corporates and the community.”

When Oon was appointed the CEO in January last year, he acknowledged the need to balance the Government’s social objectives with the private sector’s economic objectives, but made clear his priority was to serve all Singaporeans.

Netball Singapore CEO Cyrus Medora said the balancing act is a “real struggle”, but hopes the incoming Sports Hub CEO will have a heart for Singapore sports.

He said: “I think Jin Teik did okay in many aspects, and as a Singaporean he did his best to showcase Singapore sports.

“From a Singaporean point of view, I would like the Sports Hub to host more local events. For that to happen, the next CEO should be someone who cares about Singapore sports and is able to create a national identity for the Hub with local sports.”

Oon’s predecessor Manu Sawhney, on the other hand, was seen as more business-like.

The insider said, however, that neither were suited for the role.

The source said: “Jin Teik and Manu Sawhney before him have more experience as sports-based executives or administrators, but running the Sports Hub is closer to running the Singapore Expo than a national sports association as it entails managing a calendar of events, balancing commercial and public aspects, combining facilities, events and marketing expertise.”

With a spate of high-profile departures in recent years – chief operating officer Wong Lup Wai and chief financial officer Sandy Tay had also resigned recently – James Walton, sports business group leader for Deloitte Singapore and South-east Asia, believes the next CEO should

also be able to prevent such future upheavals.

He said: “The new CEO needs to be a steady pair of hands to stabilise SPHL (Sports Hub Pte Ltd) and help retain their talented people.

“He also needs to have contacts and connections to identify an increased calendar of top events and help work with Singapore Tourism Board, Sport Singapore and other agencies to bring them in, as well as innovation and creativity to engage with the Singaporean population and create unique experiences befitting this great facility.”

CIMB Private Banking economist Song Seng Wun felt that the new CEO must be given clear objectives and priorities, with seemingly conflicting public- and private-sector interests.

He said: “They have to be clear what they want to achieve. I don’t think it matters if he is local or foreign, but he has to be a businessman. If they are bottom-line driven, the new CEO has to be ruthless because he cannot be running certain local events at a loss.

“Otherwise, if they are not clear about this, the new CEO will still be pulled in different directions and the turnovers will continue.”

davidlee@sph.com.sg

## DOMESTIC PUSH

From a Singaporean point of view, I would like the Sports Hub to host more local events. For that to happen, the next CEO should be someone who cares about Singapore sports and is able to create a national identity for the Hub with local sports.



CYRUS MEDORA, Netball Singapore CEO, on the Sports Hub’s important role in promoting local sports.

## CLEAR FOCUS NEEDED

They have to be clear what they want to achieve. I don’t think it matters if he is local or foreign, but he has to be a businessman. If they are bottom-line driven, the new CEO has to be ruthless because he cannot be running certain local events at a loss.



SONG SENG WUN, CIMB Private Banking economist, on what he expects of the new leader.



Striking a balance between community and profit is important for the Sports Hub. Back in 2017, WTA Finals ambassador Lindsay Davenport helped introduce the sport to children during the WTA Charities Community Day at the OCBC Arena. ST FILE PHOTO

# Singapore mulls over hosting world para swimming c’ships

Xener Gill

Singapore Disability Sports Council president Kevin Wong thinks it is “important” that the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships be held in the region, after Malaysia was stripped of the hosting rights of the July 29-Aug 4 event last Sunday.

“It will only bode well for the development of para swimming in the

region,” said Wong, who is also the Singapore National Paralympic Council chairman.

He added that Singapore could step up to host the event, which also serves as a qualifier for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The Republic has had experience hosting high-level sports events at short notice.

For example, Singapore hosted the World Pencak Silat Champi-

onships last December, five months after taking over from Indonesia.

But Singapore is also hosting the World Para Swimming World Series in May, calling into question the availability of resources and sponsors for two similar events in such a short time.

The world series will set foot in Asia for the first time this year with Singapore as the fifth host.

About 150 swimmers are ex-

pected at the three-day competition.

For the world championships, some 600 swimmers from over 60 nations are expected to contest over 160 titles.

“The championship is a huge undertaking and the local sports fraternity and government will need to support any intentions to bid for the event,” said Wong.

Last Sunday, the International

Paralympic Committee stripped Malaysia of its hosting rights, after the country banned Israeli athletes from participating.

Theresa Goh, 2016 Paralympic women’s 100m breaststroke SB4 bronze medallist, is competing in both world-level meets and hopes that the Republic can host the world championships as well.

Said 31-year-old Goh, who aims to qualify for Tokyo 2020: “Allowing

more opportunities for para-athletes to compete with the best in the world means more opportunities to race and more opportunities for the public to see more of these events.

“It’s good for representation, to allow people to see others who are not from their own country, with disabilities who are also athletes.”

xenerg@sph.com.sg



# EPL TITLE HOPES FAR FROM OVER: GUARDIOLA

## Second-placed City slump to 4th league loss this season although ‘anything can happen’

LONDON • Pep Guardiola’s 100th Premier League game had looked to be a mere formality after Sergio Aguero’s opener against Newcastle after only 24 seconds – the quickest Premier League goal this season. However, his players failed to build on their lightning start as Manchester City slumped to a shock 2-1 loss at St James’ Park on Tuesday to put their title defence in jeopardy. Although Guardiola, who is now facing the hardest challenge of his stewardship, insisted post-game the title race was not over as “there are still many games and anything can happen”, there seemed to be a hint of resignation with leaders Liverpool in the box seat. He said: “We had a chance today to reduce the lead. Tomorrow is a game for our opponents. When you are behind, you have to win games and we couldn’t do that.” Denying that the English champions had underestimated Newcastle, he added: “We’d never do that and that’s the reason why we’re still in four competitions. That’s why

we recorded 100 points last season. “It’s just sometimes, we don’t play at the level we want to play and that can happen, that’s something I understand completely.” But after admitting “it was not our best night” with their flat and careless display on Tyneside, talk of an unprecedented quadruple will be on the back-burner for now. The Spaniard said: “I know the challenge is big, being in all competitions is what it is. If you want to go up as a club, you have to accept that challenge. I prefer to be in that position.” It must have come as a real surprise to him after a sluggish City conceded for the first time since Roberto Firmino netted on Jan 3. It was a series of 30 unanswered strikes before Salomon Rondon’s and Matt Ritchie’s spot kick on Tuesday. Guardiola added: “We didn’t make a good performance. We didn’t take the rhythm of the game, it was slow and we weren’t aggressive enough.

“The game was not good. We did not defend the second ball well, we have to improve.” Conceding “next week will be tough” – City have to play Arsenal, Everton and Chelsea in seven days – he challenged his side to rise to the occasion as there were “a lot of titles and points to play for”. The 48-year-old also attempted to put a spin on the upset and their tricky run of upcoming fixtures as they “were still in January”, and so, there could be plenty more twists and turns in Liverpool’s bid to end a 29-year wait to win the league. He said: “There’s a lot of time but of course, when you’re behind the leaders, you don’t want to drop points and every game is one less. “A lead of seven points is a lot but we’re not in April or May. There are a lot of tough games to play against sides trying to stay in this division, or playing to get into the Europa League or the Champions League. “In our case, we will do our best to be there and not to give up.” With City’s unremitting pressing and cutting interplay curiously absent against Rafa Benitez’s men, it meant he also missed out on an outright record of achieving most wins in the league era by any manager in

THERE IS STILL TIME

**A lead of seven points is a lot but we’re not in April or May. There are a lot of tough games to play against sides trying to stay in this division, or playing to get into the Europa League or the Champions League.**



**PEP GUARDIOLA**, Man City manager, keeping his chin up despite expecting Liverpool to beat Leicester last night.

their first 100 games. Instead, he will now share that landmark with his old rival and former Manchester United boss Jose Mourinho, who won 73 of his first 100 games with Chelsea. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS



Salomon Rondon wheeling away after equalising for Newcastle against Manchester City in their Premier League game at St James’ Park on Tuesday. Matt Ritchie’s penalty gave the Magpies a shock win over the champions. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Start off well, Solskjaer tells United after winning run ends

1st

Manchester United have failed to open the scoring for the first time under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in nine matches in all competitions.

LONDON • Manchester United caretaker boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer warned his players against complacency after a 2-2 draw at home to Burnley halted their six-game winning streak in the English Premier League under him. He had been bidding to make history by becoming the first manager to win his first seven league games, but was thwarted after the Clarets seized a shock two-goal lead with nine minutes left on Tuesday night. Although United salvaged a point, after Paul Pogba’s penalty and an added-time goal from Victor Linde-

lof cancelled out strikes from Ashley Barnes and Chris Wood, Solskjaer criticised his players for being “too slow in possession in the first half”. He said: “The danger of winning might be that you think what we’ve done before gives us the right to start off on 90 per cent because we’re winning one or two-nil. “But we don’t. You have to start properly in each game and today, we didn’t start off well enough to cause Burnley enough problems.” The Red Devils, on 45 points and now two behind fifth-placed Arse-

nal, piled plenty of pressure on Burnley’s defence, but caused too few problems with their lack of wing play. Solskjaer added: “We know they (Burnley) are well organised and happy if we cross the ball, we needed more tempo and more urgency in the play, play our way into the box more.” He was, however, happy with the late rally after the Old Trafford faithful were on the verge of witnessing his first loss in charge. The Norwegian said: “I was stopped so many times by the staff,

so many people saying great fighting spirit, and the way they came back was fantastic and so of course (I am) happy with a point. “We could have got three even at the end but we just ran out of time. We started too late with the urgency, that’s a learning curve, but now you’ve got your answer, (we) can come back if we go one down or two down, so I’m very happy with the response.” But United’s Serbian midfielder Nemanja Matic did not share Solskjaer’s optimism over their battling qualities as he felt that the draw

was still “two points lost”. Conceding that their performance had not been up to scratch, he said: “We expected more. We should play better, have to play better, see where we made mistakes, to improve and play like we have in the last seven or eight games. “But this is the Premier League, every team has quality and will punish you if you miss chances, exactly what Burnley did today. “The mentality needs to be much better than the first 75 minutes. I have to repeat – today was not good enough.” REUTERS

# Warnock hails Cardiff’s response to Sala tragedy

LONDON • Cardiff manager Neil Warnock said he was proud of his team despite losing 2-1 at Arsenal on Tuesday. It was the first time the Premier League side played since a plane carrying the club’s record signing Emiliano Sala disappeared over the English Channel. The Argentinian, 28, was on his way to the Welsh capital to join his new team on Jan 21, just two days after completing a £15 million (\$\$26.6 million) move from French Ligue 1 club Nantes. Ahead of the game, Warnock described the past week as the toughest of his career, but admitted it had been cathartic for the team to play at the Emirates Stadium. A minute’s reflection was held before kick-off and the visiting fans unveiled a banner that read: “We

never saw you play and never saw your score, but Emiliano, our beautiful bluebird, we will love you forever more.” Both captains also laid a bouquet of flowers each on the pitch, while Argentina shirts and flags were waved in the away section. Admitting there were “more important things” than losing a football game, Warnock said: “Tonight in the circumstances, we’ve only worked on the system for 24 hours. “They couldn’t have given me any more and I’m really proud to be their manager. “I can’t explain really how it has been this week. But you’ve not wanted to get out of bed because everything was miserable. Nobody could actually do anything about it. It’s been really difficult.”



He also paid tribute to Sala by confirming the club had no plans to dip into the transfer market again to replace him as “Emiliano was the one I worked on for a couple of months”. While Cardiff will not augment the squad with another striker,

Cardiff City supporters display tributes for Argentinian forward Emiliano Sala ahead of the Premier League match against Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday. Also, a minute’s reflection was held before kick-off. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Warnock admitted they needed “a couple of defenders to supplement because we are short in numbers”. The away side ultimately were made to pay for defensive lapses despite having been the better side before half-time, with Bobby Reid missing two big chances. Arsenal finally clicked into gear after the break, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang slotting home a penalty for his 15th Premier League goal of the season after Sead Kolasinac was tripped in the box. Alexandre Lacazette then sealed a vital three points as the Gunners bid to finish in the top four. Nathaniel Mendez-Laing, who came off the bench, nabbed a consolation goal for Warnock’s men. Cardiff defender Sol Bamba told the BBC that some players are now scared to fly, saying: “We travel by plane and some of the lads have been thinking ‘I don’t want to go on it anymore’. “The gaffer... and the club have been good in terms of bringing someone in to talk to if we need to.” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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# KHABIB MAY NOT FIGHT IN LAS VEGAS AGAIN

## Russian reportedly upset with disparity in fines and bans for brawl following Conor fight

LAS VEGAS • Khabib Nurmagomedov is reportedly “done” with fighting in Las Vegas after his teammates were handed a year-long suspension by the Nevada State Athletic Commission on Tuesday.

That was what his manager Ali Abdelaziz told ESPN’s Ariel Helwani. The decision came after Zubaira Tukhugov and Abubakar Nurmagomedov received the stiffest punishments for their part in the

ugly scenes that followed the end of the UFC 229 event on Oct 6. Khabib submitted Conor McGregor to extend his undefeated streak to 27 wins, but the bout, one of the most lucrative in Ultimate Fighting Championship history, was marred by chaotic scenes, with brawls spreading into the crowd. On Tuesday, McGregor was fined US\$50,000 (S\$68,000) and sus-

pending for six months while Khabib was docked US\$500,000 and banned for nine months. Both fines will be deducted from their purse for the fight. While all the suspensions have been backdated to October, Khabib has decided to show solidarity with his compatriots. According to Helwani, he will “not fight until their suspensions

are over and is now targeting a return to action at (New York’s) Madison Square Garden in November”. That would render a possible three-month reduction in his ban as pointless – the offer was put forth to him if he recorded an anti-bullying message for the Las Vegas Police Department. Khabib has been left seething at the disparity in fines, with the 30-year-old responding by simply tweeting “politics forever”. Abdelaziz also blasted that “it is b\*\*\*\*”. He added: “I don’t think it’s fair. Khabib gets \$500k and Conor gets \$50k?”. But unlike Khabib, McGregor and his manager Audie Attar appeared contrite for the incidents that transpired after his last fight. Attar said in a statement: “We are grateful to the commission for its serious focus and the decision, which will allow fans to see their favourite fighter return to the Octagon.”

The Irishman yesterday tweeted: “I am thankful for the Nevada Athletic Commission’s fair assessment and handling of the brawl incident. “It was not my intention to land the final blow of the night on my opponent’s blood relative. It’s just how it played out. I look forward to competing again soon.” In a follow-up tweet, he posted two pictures of the melee which showed him counter-punching one of Khabib’s teammates and said: “Straight left hand inside the attackers jab. He attempted to use the big security guard that’s in all the movies as cover, but I could smell him a mile away and landed flush down the pipe.” In typical brash fashion, he had a parting shot for his unbeaten opponent’s camp, claiming he still landed “the final blow of the night (at) UFC 229 in association with McGregor Sports and Entertainment”. REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN



Khabib Nurmagomedov of Russia holding down Conor McGregor of Ireland in their UFC lightweight championship bout during UFC 229 in Las Vegas in October last year. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

10x

Khabib Nurmagomedov's US\$500,000 fine versus Conor McGregor's US\$50,000

1.5x

Nurmagomedov's nine-month suspension versus McGregor's six months.

# F1 promoters upbeat after raising concerns with Liberty

LONDON • The race promoters in Formula One believe their criticism of the sport’s owner, Liberty Media, has proved to be worthwhile and will expect the company to cooperate closely with them in future. Liberty met the Formula One Promoters’ Association (Fopa) on Tuesday after the organisation had raised serious concerns about the way the sport was being run. Stuart Pringle, the managing director of the Silverstone circuit and chairman of Fopa, was largely posi-

tive after the meeting. “There is every indication the message has been received,” he told the BBC. “We were frustrated that we felt we had no option but to take this sort of action. But actually we have had a very positive day. “We believe our concerns will be looked at and we as a group of promoters do recognise that ultimately we are all striving for the same thing – a healthy sport. “We want to work in a meaningful

way to achieve that so we will work collaboratively with them going forward.” Fopa represents 16 of the current 21 grands prix, including the Singapore night race, on the F1 calendar and issued a statement taking the sport’s owner to task after a meeting on Monday. Following the Tuesday meeting, a Singapore GP spokesman said: “Singapore GP had attended the Fopa meeting on Monday, and a joint release was sent out from all mem-

bers present. “The meeting with Liberty Media this morning was very productive and Singapore GP was encouraged with the plans Liberty shared.” Liberty bought F1 in 2017 and has since been trying to develop the sport but has yet to make any statement on the meeting with Fopa. Fopa raised three major concerns: • It was detrimental to the sport for fans to lose free access to content and broadcasting, particularly in

the UK where only the British Grand Prix is set to be shown on free-to-air television. • There was a “lack of clarity on new initiatives in F1 and a lack of engagement with promoters on their implementation”. • Promoters pay huge fees to host races, with Silverstone expected to pay approximately £20 million (S\$35.4 million) for this year’s British Grand Prix. The fees are a major source of income for F1 but increasingly promoters have main-

tained they were unable to meet them. F1 has been attempting to agree a new race in Miami but is understood to be trying to use a profit-sharing model rather than a hosting fee, to which Fopa also objected. “New races should not be introduced to the detriment of existing events although the association is encouraged by the alternative business models being offered to prospective venues,” said the statement. THE GUARDIAN

# Male cheerleaders to make Super Bowl debut

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ATLANTA • The Super Bowl is synonymous with tailgate parties, glitzy advertisements, headline musical acts, gyrating dancers and of course, the infamous “wardrobe malfunction” incident in 2004. On Sunday, male cheerleaders will be added to that list. Tom Brady will lead the New England Patriots out against the Los Angeles Rams as he bids to cap the 19th season of his storied National Football League career with his

sixth Super Bowl trophy. While the quarterback has been pencilled in to play in a record-extending ninth Super Bowl in what will be New England’s 11th trip to the annual championship game, a slice of history will also be made on the sidelines. Quinton Peron and Napoleon Jinlins will break new ground as the first male cheerleaders to perform at a Super Bowl. This is the first season in league

history that male cheerleaders have been allowed to strut their stuff and the duo will dance for the Rams alongside their female counterparts at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. Last week, Peron tweeted his excitement after the Rams clinched their spot at Super Bowl LIII, saying: “Napoleon, you think Atlanta is ready for us? Nahhhhhh. We’re going to the Super Bowl.” In an interview with TV show Good Morning America last Thursday, he told the hosts of his journey in trying out for the Rams squad: “Why can’t I be down there? I’ve choreographed for girls who dance on pro teams, I’ve danced with girls on various pro teams. I just thought, ‘Why not me?’ “We can both say we have both been reached out to by so many men that are so excited to try out, and not just men our age, but young men trying out for their junior high school dance team or cheer team and high schools. “It’s exciting to see society change a little bit. “We are extremely excited to see what is going to happen next year.”

A Game of Two Halves

David Lee and Rohit Brijnath discuss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, the Australian Open and Singapore Bowling's bold move. <http://str.sg/oLwZ>

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

CRICKET  
4th ODI NZ v India (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 10am).

GOLF  
European Tour Saudi International: Day 1 (StarHub Ch204, 4pm & 7.30pm).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL  
ABL Malaysia Dragons v CLS Knights (StarHub Ch202, 8.30pm).

FOOTBALL  
Asian Cup Final: Japan v Qatar (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 9.30pm).

GOLF  
European Tour Saudi International: Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 4pm & 7.30pm).

For latest updates, go to [singtelv.com.sg](http://singtelv.com.sg) & [starhubgo.com](http://starhubgo.com) or check the on-screen TV guide.



# SPORT

## HARDEN EXTENDS RUN IN 'TERRIBLE LOSS'

He has 30pts or more for 24th straight game but Rockets below par against lowly Pelicans

HOUSTON • James Harden's unreal January ended on a low on Tuesday night not because he failed to live up to his high standards – but because the Houston Rockets lost 121-116 to a depleted New Orleans Pelicans.

The guard had 37 points to extend his National Basketball Association (NBA) streak of at least 30

points to 24 games.

Despite finishing the month with an average of 43.6 points per game, which according to ESPN is the most by any player since Wilt Chamberlain's 45.8 in March 1963, Harden was irate at the manner of their "terrible loss".

He told ESPN the home defeat had been a letdown. Houston were

poor from three-point range, 19 of 56, and 40 of 101 overall.

They also failed to take advantage of a Pelicans side missing four of their five starters and still reeling from the trade request of marquee player Anthony Davis on Tuesday.

The visitors were also on a poor run, having dropped five of their last six games, while Houston were coming off three straight wins.

However, New Orleans' Jahlil Okafor produced a season-high 27 points while Jrue Holiday had a fine defensive performance, posting 19

points, six rebounds, eight assists and six blocked shots.

That was enough to slow down Harden, who became the first player since Michael Jordan in March 1987 to score 600 points in a month.

Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni admitted that Holiday, the Pelicans' only regular starter, did "a heck of a job" on the reigning Most Valuable Player, saying: "Jrue is probably one of the best defenders in the league, if not the best."

The All-Star felt that despite the

uncertainty surrounding Davis' future, the Pelicans had proven they "were here to play basketball".

Holiday said: "Everybody here in this locker room got here because of their ability to play. Given the opportunity, given encouragement from coaches and teammates with each other, it's pretty easy to play with these guys."

Okafor added: "The message was just to have fun, play together out there, give it your all and we can live with the outcome. We were able to come out with the W (at the Toyota Centre)."

Davis, who was sidelined by a finger injury, watched from the bench hours after the NBA fined him US\$50,000 (S\$68,000) because his agent's public revelation of his desire to be traded violated league rules.

"That's going to play out the way it plays out," Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry said before declining to comment further. "Everything that needed to be said has been said."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS



Houston Rockets' James Harden splitting the defence of the New Orleans Pelicans' Jahlil Okafor (left) and Darius Miller at Toyota Centre on Tuesday. The guard had 37 points to average 43.6 for January. PHOTO: REUTERS

### Commentary

## Johnson must get Davis to avoid another turnover

Bill Plaschke

Magic Johnson is back on the fast break and, this time, he has to finish.

This time, he has to pull off the big trade that has so far eluded him. This time, he has to give up on the kids he has thus far protected.

Anthony Davis is all but publicly begging to come to the Los Angeles Lakers, and, this time, right now, Johnson, president of basketball operations of the Los Angeles Lakers, has to get him here.

Finish with Davis, and the Lakers have a legitimate chance to finish their LeBron James era with at least one championship.

Miss and the LeBron James era could be a complete waste.

These high stakes were sent soaring on Monday morning with the news that Davis, the sport's best big man and one of its few franchise changers, has formally asked the New Orleans Pelicans to trade him.

Check out the timing of this demand, which was made in advance of the trade deadline on Feb 7. That's not a coincidence. The Lakers can make New Orleans the best offer until then.

After that deadline, Davis would not be available until the summer,

at which point the asset-loaded Boston Celtics would be free of a contractual restraint in the collective bargaining agreement and be allowed to make New Orleans a better offer while keeping Kyrie Irving.

So, basically, Johnson has about seven days to make this happen, or risk losing a chance at Davis until he becomes a free agent next year, at which point James will be turning 36.

Magic, welcome to your own personal Super Bowl week.

Acquiring Davis, a rare 2.08m talent who is a five-time All Star and still only 25, is Johnson's biggest personal challenge since taking over two years ago as president of basketball operations, and that includes last summer.

While Johnson certainly deserves credit for bringing in James, the wooing didn't appear that difficult considering the King already had his heart set on playing in Los Angeles.

Making the big trade is much trickier and, for Johnson, has been much more problematic.

When Paul George was angling for a move from the Indiana Pacers a couple of years ago, Johnson was reportedly unwilling to part with Lonzo Ball and Brandon Ingram, and the rest is Oklahoma City history.

When Kawhi Leonard was hoping to land in LA from San Antonio last year, Kyle Kuzma was reportedly protected, the Spurs traded Leonard to Toronto, and now he may wind up with the Clippers.

It appears the Lakers are already meeting to discuss the process of formally chasing Davis, and if this doesn't work, it can't be for lack of trying. Johnson needs to offer them everyone but Lawrence Tanter (the Lakers' public address announcer).

He needs to shed every bit of ego behind the drafting and development of their young stars.

**They might not be able to overcome the mighty Golden State Warriors this season, but with James and Davis alone, they can push them in the Conference Finals, and wouldn't that be fun?**

He needs to be willing to package the whole lot and ship them overnight.

The Pelicans will want Kuzma. They will want Ball. They're apparently interested in the emerging Ivica Zubac. They may even still want Ingram?

That these young players have been either awful or injured during long stretches of James' current groin-strain absence – they went 6-11 after the 121-105 home loss to Philadelphia – doesn't help Johnson's chances. While essentially auditioning for the Pelicans, the kids have continually blown their lines.

Whether the Pelicans can be sold on potential, one thing they surely must believe is that, with Monday's demand being so public, they cannot hang on to Davis until this summer when the Celtics' riches become available, especially since Davis could kill any Boston deal by saying he will never sign there.

Seriously, how do they sell their fans on their final 31 games when their team leader doesn't want to be there? The situation is going to be awkward and even ugly.

The same could be said for the Lakers if they don't get Davis. At this point, with rising concerns that James' bionic body is finally wearing down, the Lakers might not be the preferred destination of

the best potential free agents. They suddenly might not be able to make that big summer score.

With Davis, everything changes. They will again be an attractive spot for that second free agent for whom they have saved salary cap space.

And even if that doesn't work, Davis could be all they need.

The Lakers have a history of winning championships with two great players and the veteran role players who will flock to their side while chasing a ring. They did it with Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant. They did it with Bryant and Pau Gasol.

They might not be able to overcome the mighty Golden State Warriors this season, but with James and Davis alone, they can push them in the Conference Finals, and wouldn't that be fun? Then, when the Warriors implode this summer and the Lakers collect a full team around their two stars, a championship could beckon.

Since that monumental day in July when James agreed to join the Lakers, that's what this is all about, right? Leading the Lakers back to a championship?

With the great reward of LeBron James comes great responsibility. In signing him, Johnson started the fast break toward greatness.

Now he must finish. DPA

### SportsWorld

**Kanphanitnan takes 3-shot lead in Sentosa**

Thai golfer Kanphanitnan Muangkhumsakul leads the two-day HSBC Women's World Championship qualifying tournament after an opening three-under 69 yesterday at the Sentosa Golf Club's New Tanjong Course.

Singapore's Amanda Tan is second and trails by three shots. The winner will qualify for the Feb 28-March 3 tournament in Singapore.

**Neymar ruled out for last-16 tie with United**

PARIS • Paris-Saint Germain's Champions League chances have suffered a major setback with their star forward Neymar yesterday ruled out for 10 weeks with a foot injury.

The Brazilian footballer, who has a fractured metatarsal, will miss both legs of the French champions' last-16 tie against Manchester United, although he could be fit for a potential quarter-final in April, should PSG progress to the next round.

The first leg at Old Trafford will be on Feb 12, with the return in Paris on March 6.

REUTERS

**Ex-coach's jail term raised to 18 months**

SEOUL • The former coach convicted of physically abusing South Korean double Olympic short-track gold medalist Shim Suk-hee had his prison sentence increased to 18 months yesterday.

Cho Jae-beom was initially sentenced to 10 months last year, but the Suwon District Court extended his term after Shim testified at an appeal hearing.

While Cho has admitted to beating athletes "to improve their performance", he has denied sexually assaulting Shim.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Akkaev gets 8-year suspension for doping**

MOSCOW • Russia's former world weightlifting champion Khadzhimurat Akkaev has been banned for eight years for his third doping offence since 2005, the country's weightlifting federation said yesterday.

The 33-year-old, who won the world title in the 105kg category in Paris in 2011 and silver medal in the 94kg category at the 2004 Athens Olympics, will remain suspended until Aug 1, 2024.

Aleksandar Petrov, the head of the anti-doping commission of Russia's weightlifting federation, told Tass news agency that the news of his suspension had been relayed to him by the International Weightlifting Federation, but Akkaev could still appeal against the decision.

REUTERS

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# life

**D** **WHAT'S EATING THE BACHELOR**  
Playing up stereotypes is tired and lazy  
**D6**

**I intend to live life, not just exist.**

— George Takei

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DESIGN: SALLY LAM PHOTO: MM2 ENTERTAINMENT

## Pig out on movies

**John Lui** rounds up festive flicks in cinemas and uplifting short films online to catch during the Chinese New Year holidays. **D2&3**

Malaysian singer-actor A-niu in *A Journey Of Happiness*.


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## CHINESE NEW YEAR MOVIES

## In cinemas

**A JOURNEY OF HAPPINESS****What:** Comedy**When:** Opens today**Director:** J.Y. Teng**Stars:** Joyce Cheng (above), Lo Hoi Pang, Lin Min Chen, A-niu, Alex Lam, Jerry Lamb

When the Siew family from Hong Kong fly to Malaysia for a holiday, comedic consequences ensue when nothing goes right. The movie features a Hong Kong cast playing the Siewes, who go on the road to tourist spots in Cameron Highlands and Ipoh, among others.

FESTIVE  
SCREEN  
PICKS

The Straits Times rounds up films from family-friendly fare to thrillers, in cinemas or online, for the movie lover



**John Lui**  
Film Correspondent

There seems to be an especially healthy crop of movies in cinemas this Chinese New Year. For starters, how about three pictures from the titans of the holiday season: action superstar Jackie Chan, Hong Kong actor-director Stephen Chow and Singapore's own Jack Neo, making his first action-comedy.

On the Hollywood side, there is a young-adult science-fiction spectacular, *Alita: Battle Angel*, a James Cameron-produced work based on a popular manga; and the sequel to a popular hit, *The Lego Movie 2*. Whether you are looking for hours of entertainment or seeking relief from reunion overload, there is plenty to take in, in cinemas or online.

johnlui@sph.com.sg

**MISSBEHAVIOUR****What:** Comedy**When:** Opens today**Director:** Pang Ho Cheung**Stars:** Dada Chan, June Lam, Isabella Leong, Gigi Leung, Patrick Tse, Miriam Yeung (above)

Award-winning writer-director Pang is known for comedies that

blend social satire with adult humour (*Women Who Flirt*, 2014; *Vulgaria*, 2012). In this send-up of Hong Kong values and female bonding, a bottle of breast milk left in an office refrigerator by a senior executive, used by mistake as creamer, becomes the catalyst for a group of estranged friends to reconnect.

**PEGASUS****What:** Drama-comedy**When:** Opens on Tuesday**Director:** Han Han**Stars:** Shen Teng, Huang Jingyu, Yin Zheng, Yin Fang, Tian Yu

This motor-racing work featuring a cast from China trades on racetrack action and a feel-good story of a veteran driver trying to make a comeback in the sport, while becoming a better father to his six-year-old son.

**KILLER NOT STUPID****What:** Action-comedy**When:** Opens on Tuesday**Director:** Jack Neo**Stars:** Apple Chan, Amber An (both above), Jay Shih, Nadow, Gadrick Chin, Ryan Lian

Singaporean comedy icon Neo goes Asia-wide in this, his first action-comedy. This picture, set briefly in Singapore before moving on to Taiwan, features actors from both territories bringing, one hopes, mirth and mayhem to a tale of spies and assassins out to grab a top-secret device.

PHOTOS: 20TH CENTURY FOX, GOLDEN VILLAGE, MM2 ENTERTAINMENT, NETFLIX, SHAW ORGANISATION, STARHUB, THE PROJECTOR, WARNER BROS, VIDEOSEE

**ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL****What:** Science-fiction action**When:** Opens on Tuesday**Director:** Robert Rodriguez**Stars:** Rosa Salazar (above), Christoph Waltz, Jennifer Connelly, Mahershala Ali

A new cinematic universe beckons with this big-budget young-adult picture, based on Yukito Kishiro's manga series

with a Pinocchio-like story of the relationship between a scientist and a cyborg who yearns to be a real girl. While out scavenging for parts, Dr Ido (Waltz) finds the head of a cyborg he names Alita (Salazar). He re-animates her and finds that while her memory has been wiped, she possesses fighting skills everyone believes have been lost in the last great war.

**KNIGHT OF SHADOWS: BETWEEN YIN AND YANG****What:** Fantasy-comedy**When:** Opens on Tuesday**Director:** Yan Jia**Stars:** Jackie Chan (above), Ethan Juan, Elaine Zhong, Lin Peng

If Hollywood can launch a new cinematic universe with Alita this Chinese New Year, China can do the same with Chinese mythology. In this big-budget fantasy picture that pits Chan's demon hunter Pu Songling against a range of beings in human and non-human forms, viewers should expect spells, computer-driven visuals and lots of action.

**THE NEW KING OF COMEDY****What:** Comedy**When:** Opens on Tuesday**Director:** Stephen Chow**Stars:** Wang Baoqiang, E Jingwen

Chow's sequel to the 2016 hit, the eco-fantasy *The Mermaid*, seems to have been delayed in this, but from the trailer, it looks like a return to his earlier style of rapid-fire physical comedy.

way back to his *King Of Comedy* (1999) to find a follow-up. Like the original, this new film is set in the world of wannabe actors dreaming of their big break, but find each day more humiliating than the last. Chow (above in blue, in a behind-the-scenes picture) does not act in this, but from the trailer, it looks like a return to his earlier style of rapid-fire physical comedy.

**THE LEGO MOVIE 2****What:** Animation comedy**When:** Opens Feb 7**Director:** Mike Mitchell**Stars:** Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, Will Arnett, Tiffany Haddish

The follow-up to the 2014 smash sees the return of Emmet (Pratt), Batman (Arnett) and the rest of the gang, teaming up to

defeat an alien invasion led by Queen Watveva Wa'Nabi (Haddish). The original's directing team of Phil Lord and Christopher Miller has handed the reins over to Mike Mitchell (*Trolls*, 2016; *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water*, 2015). Judging from the trailer, the cheerful zaniness of the first film thankfully seems to be intact.

**INTEGRITY****What:** Crime thriller**When:** Opens Feb 7**Director:** Alan Mak**Stars:** Sean Lau (above), Nick Cheung, Karen Lam, Anita Yuen

Mak and producer Felix Chong, the force behind some of Hong Kong's top thrillers (the *Infernal*

Affairs trilogy, 2002 to 2003), are basing this white-collar crime story on the work of the ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption). Lau is the anti-fraud analyst while Yuen plays a senior customs officer suspected of cigarette smuggling. As with *Infernal Affairs*, a trilogy is planned.

**COLETTE****What:** Biopic**When:** Opens Feb 7**Director:** Wash Westmoreland**Stars:** Keira Knightley (above), Dominic West

Born into Belle Epoque France, Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette (Knightley) married a famed literary figure, became a writer of note and caused tongues in Paris to wag due to the sexual frankness of her stories and the taboo-breaking nature of her affairs.

**PEPPA CELEBRATES CHINESE NEW YEAR****What:** Live action, animation**When:** Opens Feb 7**Director:** Zhang Dapeng**Stars:** Zhu Yawen, Liu Yun

The cartoon character Peppa Pig is popular around the world, especially in China. This Mandarin co-production between Peppa's Canadian

owners and Chinese studio Alibaba Group is the first set in China to mix live action with animation. The story revolves around a family coming together for Chinese New Year. As they celebrate the traditional way, the parents and grandparents tell the young ones stories of how Peppa's own family marks the occasion.

## Online

**GUANG****Where:** Viddsee (go to [www.viddsee.com/video/guang/nmo7y](http://www.viddsee.com/video/guang/nmo7y))

Malaysian film-maker Quek Shio Chuan recently turned his short project into a feature.

Wen Guang is autistic and struggles with communication. Forced to find a job to make ends meet, he sets out on an odyssey, but in secret, he nurtures a passion that has nothing to do with what others think is essential.

**THE RED TURTLE****Where:** HBO Go

This Oscar-nominated work of animation from Dutch film-maker Michael Dudok de Wit draws graphics and storytelling inspiration from

both Western and Japanese styles. The near-wordless fairy tale is an account of a man marooned on an island, doomed to be alone, until one day, he meets a turtle who seems to be as lonely as him.

**MOVE OUT NOTICE****Where:** Viddsee (go to [www.viddsee.com/video/move-out-notice/prbtlx](http://www.viddsee.com/video/move-out-notice/prbtlx))

Wei and her mother do not argue any more because her mother has, for months, been exchanging notes with her

instead of talking to avoid conflict. In this award-winning comedy-drama short from Singapore film-maker Leon Cho, when Wei tells her mother she is going to live on her own, a blow-up ensues.

**DEAR EX****Where:** Netflix (from tomorrow)

This Taiwanese comedy-drama opened last year's Singapore International Film Festival, but not before it won a clutch of nominations, including Best Feature, at the Golden Horse Awards.

It won three, including Best

Actress for Hsieh Ying-hsuan (above left, with Roy Chiu). Co-directors Mag Hsu and Hsu Chih-yen inject plenty of emotion to this story about a widow (Hsieh), who is shocked the nominee for her dead husband's insurance payout is his male lover. The resulting conundrum drags in her son, leading to soul-searching and divided loyalties.

**GRANDMA IN JULY****Where:** Viddsee (go to [www.viddsee.com/video/grandma-in-july/6dn2a](http://www.viddsee.com/video/grandma-in-july/6dn2a))

In this short drama about second chances from Singapore film-maker Chang Kai Xiang,

shortlisted for the Viddsee Juree Singapore prize last year, Ah Ma (grandmother) likes to come back from the other side to look for something she has lost. One day, her grandson, to his horror, becomes aware of her presence.

**THE BALLAD OF BUSTER SCRUGGS****Where:** Netflix

This Western anthology from the duo of Joel and Ethan Coen (*No Country For Old Men*, 2007) is made up of six short

works, so it is perfect for watching on the go. Each work is a gem of black comedy set in the Old West, viewed by the Coens as a place where men and women go to learn the bitterest truths. Stars Tim Blake Nelson (above),

**NANNY MCPHEE AND THE BIG BANG****Where:** HBO Go

In this comedy gem from 2010 – the follow-up to the 2005 original – Emma Thompson

(above) stars as the snagle-toothed, unbrowed, black-clad figure of the title, a stern woman who does not hesitate to use her magic to deal unusual punishments to badly behaved children.

**POLAR****Where:** Netflix

You might want to watch this privately on your phone because of the nudity and violence. Mads Mikkelsen (above) is a super assassin looking forward

to a peaceful retirement in his snowy cabin, but old colleagues just will not leave him alone. This stylish, pulpy piece of B-movie fun features gloriously over-the-top villains and taut action.





# What drives a war journalist

**A Private War delves into what pushed Marie Colvin to put herself in harm's way to chase her stories**

**Alison de Souza**  
In Los Angeles

A Private War, a biopic about American war correspondent Marie Colvin, explores her dogged pursuit of the truth in conflict zones, from Syria to Sri Lanka.

But the movie's message about the importance of press freedom could just as easily apply to countries at peace, says star Rosamund Pike. The film opens in Singapore today.

Speaking at a Los Angeles screening of the film in November, the 40-year-old actress is asked about the story's relevance today, especially given attacks on the media by United States President Donald Trump and the recent murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Pike, the Oscar-nominated star of the thriller *Gone Girl* (2014), says: "When you make a film, you always hope it will be timely, but you can never predict it."

"In releasing this now, we found ourselves at the centre of a crisis for journalists in that, suddenly, they find themselves targets in trying to be purveyors of the truth."

"Everybody is aware of Jamal Khashoggi's murder – not in a war zone, but in a modern building in Istanbul."

She hopes Colvin's story will inspire and encourage reporters, even though it does not shy away from examining the mental toll the job took on her.

An award-winning correspondent for London newspaper *The Sunday Times*, the late Colvin covered conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Sri Lanka and East Timor. She often put herself in harm's way to get the story and her passionate, incisive reporting focused on how wars affected civilians. She was killed in Syria in 2012.

"It's wonderful for a story about Marie, that we can shine a light on what a journalist really does and what the cost is of getting the story," says Pike, whose performance was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Drama.

"I hope it will mean a whole lot of people might go out and read about her and maybe discover some of her journalism. Or look up a period of history that might interest you and find out what she wrote about it. And there's a chance journalists will take courage from this (current) state of affairs and realise how important it is to continue to pursue their missions, to get truth from the darkest places on earth."

A Private War takes an unconventional approach to its subject in part because it was steered by Matthew Heineman, a documentary filmmaker directing his first narrative feature. The 35-year-old is better known for documentaries such as *Cartel Land* (2015) – his Oscar-nominated film about the Mexican drug cartels – and this background shows, says Pike.

"Thanks to Matt, we have chosen to tell a story that's not just about

the gungho, thrill-seeking war reporter, which might have been the substance of a film of yore, but also one exploring the cost of the fierce pursuit of a story on someone's mental health – someone who prioritises giving voice to the voiceless over her own health, sanity and well-being."

Heineman approached the story as he would a documentary in some ways, even casting real Syrian refugees in scenes where they tearfully recount their experiences to Pike.

"I really didn't want to make this a biopic. I wanted to make it more of a psychological thriller, to try and understand that psychology of what pushes a person to do this, but also what that does to him," he says.

The film-maker, whose acclaimed documentary *City Of Ghosts* (2017) is about citizen journalists taking on the terrorist group ISIS, identifies personally with this mentality.

"I've been in conflict zones and shootouts and torture chambers, so I've felt that same draw to want to cover these stories. But there's also that bizarre thing of having the privilege to come home the next day and go to a party in New York City and what that does to you to have those thoughts stay with you."

But you do not need to go to war zones to relate to Colvin's desire to lose herself in her work, Pike says.

"A lot of actors share the feeling that to delve into a character – to dive into an intense meditation on someone else's life – is an escape from yourself, which is a happy relief."

"I think Marie felt something similar in the deep empathy she had



Rosamund Pike (left) plays the fierce but traumatised American war correspondent Marie Colvin in *A Private War* (above). PHOTOS: GOLDEN VILLAGE, REUTERS

**Thanks to Matt, we have chosen to tell a story that's not just about the gungho, thrill-seeking war reporter... but also one exploring the cost of the fierce pursuit of a story on someone's mental health.**



**ACTRESS ROSAMUND PIKE,** on *A Private War* and documentary film-maker Matthew Heineman

with civilians the world over. She felt a kind of break from her own life because her home life was chaotic.

"And there's something to be said for when the stakes are clear and life is reduced to simplicity in a war zone: Your mission is clear and you feel like you're doing something worthwhile."

stlife@sph.com.sg

• A Private War is showing in cinemas.

• Watch the movie trailer bit.ly/2VCVMVI

## Reporter shaped by damage and ambition

REVIEW / DRAMA BIOPIC

**A PRIVATE WAR (M18)**

110 minutes/Now showing/★★★★☆

**The story:** Journalist Marie Colvin (Rosamund Pike) is in Homs, Syria, in 2012, reporting from a shelled building on the attacks by government forces on rebels. The story flashes back to earlier in her life, to the incident in the Sri Lankan civil war that cost her her left eye. Her editor at *The Sunday Times* in London, Sean Ryan (Tom Hollander) is troubled by her lack of concern for safety. She meets freelance photographer Paul Conroy (Jamie Dornan) during the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003 and they become friends who risk their lives in conflict zones across the world.

**John Lui**

This biopic of the American journalist Colvin (Pike), as befits a story about a writer who lived to expose the effects of war on civilians, is a portrait that does not seek to flatter its subject.

Colvin emerges as a person shaped by her damage as much as her ambition.

Director Matthew Heineman comes from the world of documentary, having made two acclaimed works, *Cartel Land* (2015), about the fight against Mexican drug gangs, and *City Of Ghosts* (2017), about citizen-journalists risking everything to report from Syrian zones controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Unlike other film-makers who move from reporting to re-enactment – Paul Greengrass (the biopic *Captain Phillips*, 2013; the 9/11 hijacking account *United 93*, 2006) comes to mind – Heineman does not strive for realism driven by cinema-verite camera moves or action-movie arcs.

Instead, he opts for psychological insight. That is achieved through episodic flashbacks illustrating key moments in Colvin's life which adhere admirably to the "show, don't tell" dictum of storytelling.

The scenes reveal, without indulging in war porn or gratuitous gore, her altruistic impulse to show the world the suffering that women and children endure when men go to war. It is an impulse not lessened by injury – to her body and, more significantly, to her mind. For Colvin, the intensity of the war experience, as films like *The Hurt Locker* (2008) say, alters body chemistry in ways that make civilian life feel trite and meaningless, which fosters the desire for risk, creating a vicious circle.

Pike's portrayal of the fierce but traumatised Colvin is superb, but the film is at its weakest showing Colvin outside of the war zone. When she is in the newsroom arguing with her boss or pursuing a love life, the scenes feel shallow and not as fully realised as those set in Syria or Iraq. These are the places where Pike's Colvin, and therefore the film, feels most at home.

## Dragon series ends with usual lush visuals, light comedy

REVIEW / ANIMATION COMEDY

**HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD (PG)**  
104 minutes/Now showing  
★★★★☆

**The story:** In this third and final film in the series that began in 2010, the village of Berk is now home to an overwhelming number of dragons, many of them rescued from hunters by Hiccup (voiced by Jay Baruchel) and his band of dragon riders. The most skilled of the dragon hunters, Grimmel (F. Murray Abraham) is out to capture Toothless, Hiccup's Night Fury dragon. Hiccup realises that the only way to keep everyone safe is to relocate all Berkians and dragons to a legendary place known as The Hidden World.

**John Lui**

In a rare show of good sense, the creators of the franchise early on

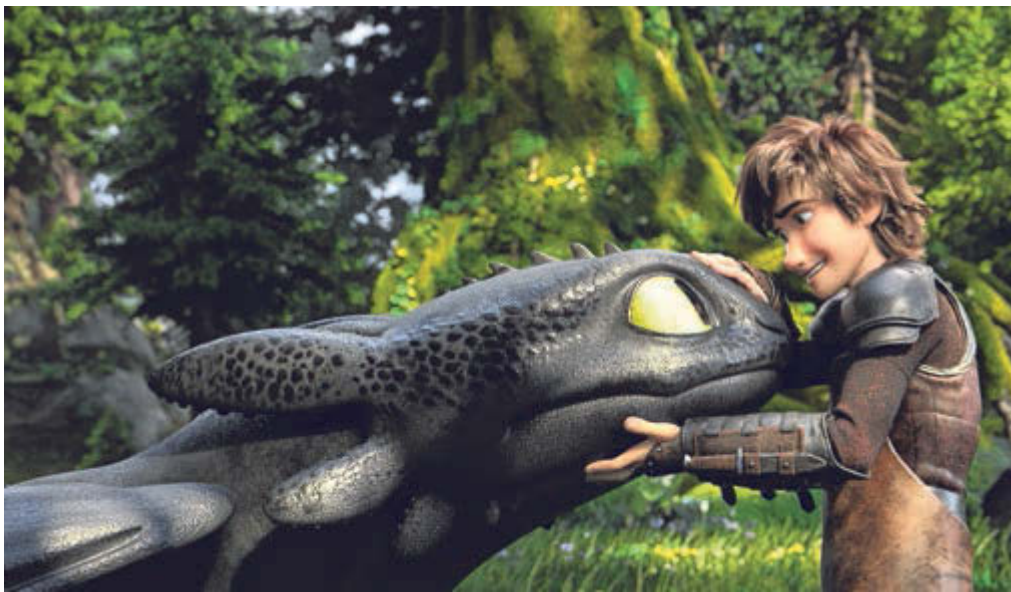
set a cap on how many films they would make and have stuck to their promise.

The result is a compact, fully realised arc about a boy and his winged friend that has run its course without running out of steam. The same cannot be said about other cinematic universes.

The trouble is that the *How To Train Your Dragon* series has relied on a single gimmick – the creatures in the title – and after the pleasures of the Hiccup-Toothless bonding story in the first film (2010), the rest have become less character-driven and more about expanding the Viking world of Berk and its inhabitants.

The ride so far has been powered by eye-popping visuals of acrobatic flight, the dragon bestiary and the spectacular landscape of the fantasy Viking universe.

On a big screen, the lushness of the images will knock viewers back in their chairs.



Hiccup and Toothless relocate their tribe to a legendary place known as The Hidden World. PHOTO: UIP

Underneath it all is a thin but serviceable adventure about Hiccup and his tribe forced to become migrants to protect themselves and the dragons.

It is a pity the material never strives to be more than light comedy that leans hard on the cute rather than something actually funny, such as cartoon outlandishness.

Older patrons will be annoyed by

inconsistencies, such as in the dragon-human relationships.

It is never clear why creatures as clever as dragons would allow themselves to become beasts of burden for the Berkians, or why they need human leadership to fight their attackers, given the awesome weapons they naturally possess.

Or even why, despite being born wild, they have the personalities of kittens.

Opportunities to shake off the perkiness are wasted. Nature might be red in tooth and claw, but you would never know it looking at these animals. Becoming a refugee is also like going on a picnic.

The series closes by explaining why dragons are not seen today, but even that lesson – that the world of man is too corrupt for creatures as pure as these – is undermined by a tacked-on happy ending.

• Watch the movie trailer bit.ly/2LySE2P



# Black films matter

BlackKkKlansman and Black Panther feature prominently in this year's Oscars race, signifying that Hollywood and audiences seem to be embracing diversity

Alison de Souza  
In Los Angeles

Black film-makers and actors are breaking new ground with the recent Oscar nominations and for two very different movies released last year.

The big-budget box-office smash Black Panther, led by a black cast and director, is up for seven awards and the first superhero flick to score a Best Picture nod. And BlackKkKlansman, a biographical comedy-drama, has six nominations, including for Best Picture and Best Director, which makes Spike Lee only the sixth black film-maker in the Academy's 91-year history to be named in that category.

To be sure, the lack of diversity highlighted by the #OscarsSoWhite campaign four years ago remains an issue. The only black actors recognised are Green Book's Mahershala Ali and Regina King for If Beale Street Could Talk, while Asian performers and women directors have been shut out completely.

But speaking at screenings of their films in Los Angeles in December, Black Panther stars and BlackKkKlansman director Lee note that Hollywood and audiences seem to be embracing stories such as theirs like never before – and it is partly about timing and the political climate.

When it comes to movies dealing with racism, one factor is recent events such as the white-supremacists rally that led to the Charlottesville riots in 2017 – a naked display of racial hatred that stunned many Americans.

This made BlackKkKlansman's premise – a black police officer trying to take down the Ku Klux Klan



Black Panther, which stars Lupita Nyong'o (left) and Letitia Wright (right), is the first superhero flick to score a Best Picture nod. PHOTOS: WALT DISNEY PICTURES

in the 1970s by, of all things, posing as white – feel more relevant.

Says Lee, who used video from Charlottesville along with other unconventional stylistic touches in the movie: "We knew that in order for this to be the best film it could be, we had to connect this story – which takes place in the mid-1970s – with today.

"And it wasn't that hard because even without the footage of Charlottesville, there's so much stuff from the same playbook that's being recycled today. These guys didn't invent the term 'America First', the Klan was saying that in the 1920s against immigrants."

The film-maker believes recent efforts to diversify the Oscars voting

body was a factor in his nomination.

His movie also reflects the growing clout of another acclaimed African-American film-maker: Jordan Peele, whose racially charged horror comedy Get Out (2017) scooped Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Best Director and Best Screenplay last year.

It was Peele who brought Lee the BlackKkKlansman script and went on to co-produce the film.

"Jordan Peele called me up with a six-word pitch: 'Black man infiltrates Ku Klux Klan'", Lee recalls, referring to the true story of Colorado police detective Ron Stallworth.

There is also a sense the director feels he has paid his dues with the many films he has made on American race relations, going back to Do The Right Thing (1989) and Malcolm X (1992).

Asked what sort of body of work he is trying to put together, Lee quips: "What did Yoda say? 'No try, do.' I'm not trying, I've been doing this for four decades. I'm 61."

Black Panther, on the other hand, comes from a director half his age – 32-year-old Ryan Coogler – and its story could not be more different: The prince of a hidden African kingdom must defeat a challenger and

steer his people down the right path.

Star Chadwick Boseman, who plays Prince T'Challa, notes that the film had a lot of novelty going for it, not least because it was the first major movie about a black superhero.

Says the 41-year-old: "There was obviously something about this that was new. And there was an excitement on the side of the studio and our side. The first conversations we had were all about the fact that you haven't quite seen this before."

Lupita Nyong'o, who plays the spy and king's guard Nakia, thinks the film managed to combine timely ideas about identity and culture with a very intimate and relatable story.

"It's a story about family, it's a story about nations and it's a very personal story that stems from questions Ryan himself was asking about his own identity as an African-American," says the 35-year-old Oscar winner (12 Years A Slave, 2013).

"So all these issues mean it is about flawed people and, at the end of the day, that's the only reality."



BlackKkKlansman, which stars Adam Driver (top left) and John David Washington (top right), scored six Oscar nominations, including Best Director for Spike Lee (above). PHOTO: UIP

stlife@sph.com.sg

## A man's struggle with sexuality and family pressure

### REVIEW / DOCUMENTARY

THE SILK AND THE FLAME (M18)  
87 minutes/Now showing at The Projector/★★★☆☆

**The story:** Yao is in his late 30s and has made a good life in Beijing. When Chinese New Year comes, he is one of the billions making their way home. He travels to his parents' home in rural Henan province, where he endures days of questions about why he has not yet found a wife. The interrogation has become more urgent because his father has been crippled by strokes.

John Lui

If you think your Chinese parents, aunts and uncles are pushy, you ought to see Yao's household.

He dreads Chinese New Year because that is when the successful, confident member of Beijing's arts community has to return to his village in Henan to become a son, one who is constantly reminded of how he has failed in his duty to marry and produce children.

American film-maker Jordan Schiele is the fly on the wall recording Yao's days of psychological pressure. Schiele, who is fluent in Mandarin, conducts interviews with Yao and chats with his mother, a formidable woman who speaks in a self-created sign language because a childhood illness rendered her deaf and mute.

It is a strange, often tragicomic tableau: The white foreigner in a



nondescript village in central China, in a house with a despondent Chinese man, a mother who gesticulates while making odd mouth noises, as his mute, bed-ridden father looks on. The son lives a double life, one that requires him to fashion a false identity at home, complete with a fake girlfriend, to have a respite from the nagging and to give his parents peace of mind.

Schiele shoots in black-and-white, giving everything an abstract look that forces viewers to focus on faces. Yao's is serene, of-

ten giving way to melancholy; his mother's is lined from worry and work while his father's is leathery from decades of toiling in the fields.

The film-maker's standpoint as an outsider, to Yao's family and to China, makes his point of view interesting. He is starting from zero in understanding Confucian family obligations and his earnestness in trying to comprehend Yao's mental distress is apparent.

At nearly 90 minutes in length though, lethargy seeps into the story. A good 20 minutes could

have been cut. Or, if Schiele had spent more time with Yao in the city or with his farmer parents in Henan prior to the festival, he might have emerged with a more visually interesting, fleshed-out story.

Still, this is a solid work of family anthropology, one that captures the complicated currents of guilt, respect, responsibility and love that run through many Asian families. Around the table at a Chinese New Year reunion, family members sit on a powder keg of emotions and history.

Documentary  
The Silk And The Flame is about Yao, who has to endure family pressure to marry and have children.  
PHOTO: THE PROJECTOR

### Top10Movies

#### SINGAPORE

1. (1) Glass
2. (2) Escape Room
3. (-) Green Book
4. (3) The Upside
5. (4) Aquaman
6. (6) More Than Blue
7. (5) Bumblebee
8. (7) Make It Big
9. (9) Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse
10. (-) One Cut Of The Dead

• Info from Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association

#### UNITED STATES

1. (1) Glass
2. (2) The Upside
3. (3) Aquaman
4. (-) The Kid Who Would Be King
5. (5) Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse
6. (14) Green Book
7. (6) A Dog's Way Home
8. (-) Serenity
9. (7) Escape Room
10. (8) Mary Poppins Returns

• Information from boxofficemojo.com





## Why is shaming Asian food still a thing on TV?



**John Lui**  
Film Correspondent

It is 2019 – and American magazines like *People* are still mistaking one Asian actor for another in their picture captions.

It is 2019 – and shaming Asian food is still a thing on American television.

On the fourth episode of the dating show, *The Bachelor*, contestants were brought to Singapore. The producers then cherry-picked food that even for some of us would probably be considered out of the ordinary – pig intestine and trotters, fish heads and, perhaps, frog – and filmed the women.

As the online video shows and a *Washington Post* article describes, the women displayed what art folk might call “performative revulsion” – the extravagant, over-the-top enactment of disgust that tells everyone that one is much better than the food being offered to him.

Shaming people for their food choices is a set-up in bitter jokes made by Asian-American comedians, who as children, were mocked for packing fried squid and kimchi in their school lunchboxes.

The punchline: In 20 years, the same bullies will be paying \$30 for the same food in a hipster cafe.

It is easy to understand kids ostracising other kids for “smelly” lunches, but it hard to imagine why adults would want to do it and, not only that, release it as public entertainment. It reveals a lot.

It shows that when they think of their audience, they picture a monolithic white bloc of people going “eww” along with the women on the show.

Do non-white people not exist in the United States? Are there not African-Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans and all the other races that make up the rapidly changing demographic, who all eat so-called weird food?

When *People* magazine this week mistook Singapore actress Tan Kheng Hua for Michelle Yeoh in a photo taken at the Screen Actors Guild awards, there was a Twitter-storm of replies telling the editors to hire more Asian reporters because white journalists just cannot seem to care enough about, or perhaps are incapable of, telling one Asian person apart from another.

Likewise, *The Bachelor* should also be Twitter-shamed into hiring more Asian staff, people who can teach its producers the slippery concept of xenophobic idiocy.

Or, with more Asian producers on board that reality show, perhaps the idea of going to the American South can be floated for the next season.

What would happen if an Asian producer suggested that contestants go to an African-American soul food place, so they can try chitlins (fried pig intestine), or to France, for a horsemeat steak?

How much “performative revulsion” would there be in that soul food restaurant, with African-American diners looking on, or in a nice Parisian brasserie? One suspects not a lot.

If not, why is it okay to do that in Singapore?

Look, we get it. The women on the show perform feats of bravery to win the heart of the hunk and that includes eating gross Asian food.

Because, apparently, putting repellent, ugly things in her mouth makes his heart grow fonder.

In that case, I have a suggestion: Go eat a Make America Great Again cap.

her home smelt of “Chinese gross-ness”: “The comment clung to me like the smell in my home... The lengths to which immigrant families have gone to hide the way we feed ourselves break my heart.”

A few women tried some bites for the camera, but then expected to be praised for their bravery.

“I just ate a fish eye for him,” bragged Hannah B., a former beauty queen who is at the centre of much of this season’s drama so far. She made a retching noise.

Then, Colton gave a toast: “To weird food and to you,” he addressed the women.

After the show somehow managed to sensitively handle a contestant’s revelation that she had been drugged and raped in college – the episode returned to the market in the post-credits segment, which is usually reserved for bloopers.

Instead, it was the women once again describing their experience with the food. And it was even worse.

“Pig intestines, ewww,” said Hannah G. “It wasn’t as bad as I thought, but we’ll see how I feel in an hour.”

The show then turned to the contestant Onyeka, who said: “My stomach doesn’t feel good.”

She walked over to a trash can and vomited. WASHINGTON POST

# US dating show pans Singapore food

## The Bachelor visits the country and perpetuates nasty stereotypes about Asian cuisine

Maura Judkis

People are rarely shown eating on *The Bachelor*.

Throughout the history of the show, women have perched in picturesque settings with muscly, vacant-eyed dudes and untouched plates of food. But Monday night was different.

For the show’s fourth episode, production moved to Singapore, giving the group of mostly white, mostly blonde women some Crazy Rich Asians-esque fantasy dates.

It was noted earlier in the episode that it was bachelor Colton Underwood’s first time leaving the country.

Colton took the women on a group date to the markets, where they shopped and took part, squeamishly, in leech therapy. Then, it was time to eat.

There are numerous tours devoted to the best street food and drinks in the city.

So, it was inevitable that they would be a stop on this episode. The women sat at a long table and the food came out.

“You guys hungry?” said Colton. “What is this? Bullfrog?”

“They say frogs taste like chicken,” said one of the women.

Off they went, rehashing some of the ugliest American stereotypes about Asian food.

The entire segment was designed to make the women try street food that is considered perfectly normal in Asia, but “disgusting” to Western palates – perpetuating nasty stereotypes that food from Asian countries is dirty and unsophisticated.

“Pig’s feet – ewwww.” said one woman, as they talked over one another.

“Wait, will I die?” asked another.

The show has never been known for its diversity. Only one woman of colour, Rachel Lindsay, has ever been the Bachelorette, and a major plotline on her season was a contestant’s racist tweets.

Two women of mixed Asian heritage have won previous seasons of *The Bachelor*. But in the show’s 23 seasons, most of the suitors and winners have been white.

However, even for *The Bachelor*, Monday night’s episode felt especially disrespectful, especially considering that the travel segments of the show are usually flattering to their host country, given the freebies and sponsorship the show receives.

The contestants were openly mocking food that – it was immediately obvious – they did not even try to understand.

This is not just a problem on *The Bachelor*.

Chef David Chang has called out “hidden racism in how people perceive not just Chinese food, but basically anything that’s different from mainstream America”, including how people demonise monosodium glutamate, or MSG, in Asian cooking, but seem unaffected by that same ingredient in Doritos, a brand of flavoured tortilla chips.

Filipino Americans grow up with “hiya”, or shame, about the smells and taste of their famous dishes, which include duck embryos and pig’s blood.

In 2017, *Bon Appetit* magazine got in hot water for saying matcha and turmeric, often used in Asian cooking, “taste like dirt”.

Writing for *The Washington Post*, Ruth Tam described what happened when a white high school friend said

## Nickelback to perform here for the first time

Anjali Raguraman

Throughout their almost 25-year-long career, Canadian rock band Nickelback have been levelled with accusations that they write songs that are simple to play, to the point of being almost formulaic.

Bassist Mike Kroeger, 46, agrees. “You’re right. They’re not that hard to play, but what’s hard is writing them,” he tells *The Straits Times* over the telephone from Los Angeles.

“You can criticise the simplicity of the art, but the creativity is evident... A lot of great creative works are simple.”

The four-piece band – who are also made up of lead singer and Kroeger’s younger brother, Chad, guitarist Ryan Peake and drummer Daniel Adair – are performing their first gig in Singapore at Zepp @ Big Box on Feb 20.

While they may have earned a reputation as the band who people love to hate, Nickelback remain one of the most commercially successful Canadian acts, having sold more than 50 million albums worldwide and garnered multiple

Grammy nominations.

Their 2001 smash hit, *How You Remind Me*, was named Top Rock Song Of The Decade by *Billboard* in 2009.

It was also the most-played song on American radio in the first decade of the 2000s, according to data by Nielsen Soundscan, which tracks sales of music and music video products.

However, Mike Kroeger says the band take the accolades as seriously as they do the criticism, which is “not at all”.

“We didn’t get in this band to get American Music or Grammy Awards and, at the same time, when you listen to the critics, it’s the biggest mistake you can make,” he says.

“I’d like to see a music critic write a song... not to hear the song, but to watch him try – that would be the fun part,” he quips.

While many other bands from during Nickelback’s peak, such as Creed and 3 Doors Down, have broken up or faded into obscurity, Nickelback are still going strong and release a new album about once every three years.

Kroeger says it comes down to



not stopping or giving up.

“Those other bands that I mentioned, they stopped playing music or their bands broke up or whatever – that’s kind of just what happens,” he notes.

Being in a band with a sibling also helps with keeping a band together.

He says: “It makes a difference. It’s far easier to quit on strangers than it is to quit on your family.”

Unlike famous brothers in bands – such as British group Oasis’ infa-

mous feuding Gallagher brothers – their occasional disagreements do not become conflicts that play out publicly for the sake of publicity.

Kroeger recalls: “Years ago, we had just gone through a successful album cycle and things were getting quieter and this (marketing) guy said Chad and I should get into a fight publicly because that would help to draw more attention.”

“But there was no way we were going to do that. That’s just not us. I

told that person ‘that was not available as a marketing angle.’”

While the band’s longevity does not seem to be waning, Kroeger says the band have been on a five-month hiatus and admits that they “have not been productive on this break”.

However, they are raring to get back on the road for their *Feed The Machine* tour, named after their latest album, which was released in 2017.

They will perform in Japan and

Australia, before hitting Singapore for their only South-east Asian stop.

Fans can rest assured that they will be playing the old songs, as well as the newer ones.

“We’ve never tried to take *How You Remind Me* out of the set. You just can’t do that,” Kroeger says.

He adds: “We know that’s what our fans want to hear and I don’t want to disappoint them by taking out the songs that made them love us in the first place.”

Nickelback comprise (from far left) Daniel Adair, Mike and Chad Kroeger and Ryan Peake. PHOTO: LAMC PRODUCTIONS

### BOOK IT / NICKELBACK FEED THE MACHINE TOUR

WHERE: Zepp @ Big Box,  
1 Venture Avenue

WHEN: Feb 20, 8pm

ADMISSION: \$128 via Sistic  
(go to [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg) or call 6348-5555); additional \$20 for priority entry that allows ticket holders to enter concert venue ahead of standard ticket holders; additional \$150 for VIP hospitality (includes a private cordoned-off area with a prime view of the stage, four drink coupons and a commemorative laminate and lanyard)



# Divas dig deeper

Sandy Lam delivers a cohesive album building on the Earth Mother vibe, and Jolin Tsai puts out a playful, edgy dance record



**ELECTRONIC POP**  
**O**  
Sandy Lam  
Universal Music  
★★★★☆



**DANCE POP**  
**UGLY BEAUTY**  
Jolin Tsai  
Sony Music Entertainment  
★★★★☆

Boon Chan

Two divas make a long-awaited return to the music scene following their last award-winning albums. Their new records are very different but very good.

Hong Kong-based Sandy Lam's last Mandarin album Gaia (2012) won four Golden Melody Awards, including for Best Female Mandarin Singer and Best Mandarin Album. While it featured a distinct Earth Mother vibe, there was also the sense that she was straddling more experimental music and more commercial fare.

The new record O, her 12th Mandarin release, feels more cohesive, with her clear-as-a-bell voice breathing life into a crop of songs dusted with electronica.

It opens with Breathe In... Breathe Out – one of two English numbers – a piano-backed track for which Lam co-wrote the music and lyrics.

Her pipes have a moving delicacy and beauty as she sings meditatively: "Each day that I wake up I tell myself/Breathe in breathe out/Each day that I wake up I start again/Breathe in breathe out."

Some of that Earth Mother vibe resurfaces on O, with references to trees, mountains, rivers and ants.



Solar System goes further as she delves into the cosmos: "The life force from light/The one and only you."

Some of the loveliest tracks here are effortlessly exquisite.

Qian Wei, which is titled Angels in English, is about the ache of longing: "Are there enough memories to weave into a blanket." While Morning Light is about the bliss of love: "Wild flowers are ostentatious/Sparrows are flying/We are in love again."

The philosophy of living in the now comes full circle at the end with the Mandarin version of Breathe In... Breathe Out, Yi Hu... Yi Xi.

At this stage of her long and storied career, Lam's music is more intimate than ever, an inward journey that is both revealing and rewarding.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese singer Jolin Tsai digs deep as well after Play (2014), which won the dance-



pop queen her first Golden Melody Award for Best Mandarin Album.

Where once she sang cheerily about plastic surgery in Kan Wo 72 Bian (Magic) ("Make the nose higher, so the air is fresh") – and was herself the subject of rife speculation whether she had gone under the knife – the artist now embraces herself fully.

She sings on Ugly Beauty, which she co-wrote: "Who dares to set the standards of beauty/Who I wanna be today/It all depends on me."

Her self-confidence comes through clearly. In Necessary Evil, with its ominous synthesizers, she lays it out: "Who's a witch, I'm cold therefore I'm beautiful/Only I can see clearly the shape of my soul."

And her advice on the groovy Womxnly: "Don't let anyone change you."

There is an edginess and playfulness here spilling over from her last record on tracks such as Lady In Red, in which she riffs on the

scarlet hue and its multitudinous associations: "I am fresh blood, I am fire, I represent danger/I am tears, red-rimmed eyes."

She would rather tell it like it is on her 14th studio album, even if it might raise an eyebrow or two, with much of the material draped in dance floor-friendly tunes.

Life Sucks does not hold back: "Horoscope for the year not too good, treat it like taking a dump."

And she gets her sexy on for Sweet Guilty Pleasure as she teases: "I enjoy every detail of your desire/Love the lump in your throat as you furtively swallow your saliva."

It all flows smoothly and makes for one compelling Ugly Beauty.

Sandy Lam's (above) 12th Mandarin release is titled O and Jolin Tsai's (left) 14th studio album is called Ugly Beauty. PHOTOS: SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT, UNIVERSAL MUSIC

bchan@sph.com.sg

• Watch the music videos for Sandy Lam's Angels at bit.ly/2CW8lBY and Jolin Tsai's Ugly Beauty at bit.ly/2DIIsIT

## Suspenseful storyteller reels listeners in



**INDIE ROCK**  
**REMINDE ME TOMORROW**  
Sharon Van Etten  
Jagjaguwar  
★★★★☆

Yeow Kai Chai



Sharon Van Etten (left) is a maestro of suspense – that emotional payoff delayed, hanging, killing you. Nevertheless, how one

faithfully hangs on her every word, sometimes rolled out with (feigned) nonchalance, or world-weariness. She is a storyteller non-pareil, deftly reeling in the unsuspecting with a droll turn of phrase.

And the New Jersey-born native has certainly kept her fans waiting – five years, since 2014's Are We There, a slo-mo chronicle of a toxic decade-old relationship combust-

ing. Her fifth album, Remind Me Tomorrow – named after the pop-up computer option to postpone a software update – boasts the same surgical approach to human relations. You'd be forgiven to think that it's devastating business as usual, cathartic and crunchy indie guitars and all, a minute into the first track, I Told You Everything.

"Sitting at the bar, I told you everything/You said, 'Holy s\*\*\*, you almost died,'" she sings over doleful piano plonks and you almost luxuriate in her stately reveal.

That is until 1min 29sec in, when a menacing thrum of the drum breaks the calm, sending off ripples across the surface.

You can thank in-demand pro-

ducer John Congleton for that casual approach to messing things up. After all, Van Etten herself has changed. She turned her back on music, went back to school to study psychology, fell into acting by accident and became a first-time mum in 2017.

"Too much has changed, I can't let you walk in in the night/I wish away my love, leave with the dawn," she declaims in the electro-sounding kiss-off No One's Easy To Love.

Whereas in the past this will most likely be delivered in a sparse acoustic backdrop, this time a febrile drum beat and distorted riffs shore up her realisation that she has no one to rely on except herself.

On Jupiter 4, named after the Roland synthesizer used for most of the album, her usual stateliness is cast against increasingly unsettling sounds. A theremin-like synth snakes through her intoxicating chant – "A love so real" – as if we are all stuck in a purgatorial state between dream and awakening. "It's true that everyone would like to have met," she coos and wheezes unexpectedly in a Tex-Mex dirge gone sci-fi.

These detours create the greatest impact precisely because they are well-timed and sparingly used.

Whether it's the moody lullaby Stay for her son or herself becoming the Comeback Kid in her home town, time casts a long shadow over her and the people around her.

In Seventeen, a new-wave pop doozie that may or may not be an older Van Etten doling out advice to a younger version of herself, she remains cool and collected till the penultimate verse when she lets it rip. "You'll crumble it up just to see/Afraid that you'll be just like me," she snarls out each syllable. Drums hit harder and there is no distance between young and old.

## Nostalgic music for troubled times



**CLASSICAL**  
**RUSSIAN SERENADE**  
Gamma Majoris Ensemble  
Champs Hill Records 138  
★★★★★

Chang Tou Liang

Imagine a salon in turn-of-the-century Moscow or Saint Petersburg just before the Great War.

This 77-minute album showcases music likely to be enjoyed by the moneyed class or bourgeoisie

during those troubled times.

It comprises Russian art songs or "romances" by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, arranged and performed by Gamma Majoris Ensemble, four young Russians – soprano Anastasia Prokofieva, pianist Yulia Chaplina, violinist Ksenia Berezina and cellist Alisa Liubarskaya.

Of the 25 tracks, 12 are sung accompanied by various combinations of instruments, including Tchaikovsky's Serenade, By An Open Window, It Was In Early Spring and On This Moonlit Night.

His well-known None But The Lonely Heart and Amid The Noise Of The Ball surprisingly take the

form for cello and piano duo only. For piano solo, Tchaikovsky's Nocturne In F Major, Meditation and Un Poco Di Chopin make lovely interludes.

Rachmaninov accounts for just six numbers, including songs Before My Window, Do Not Sing, My Beauty, They Answered and the violin showpiece Gypsy Dance, from the early opera Aleko, but these merge seamlessly with Tchaikovsky's typically bittersweet and melancholic idiom.

Performed with much feeling and an unmistakable sense of nostalgia, this collection could have been called From Russia With Love.

### MusicCharts

#### APPLE MUSIC

1. (1) 7 Rings – Ariana Grande
2. (2) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
3. (3) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
4. (4) Without Me – Halsey
5. (8) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
6. (5) Everything I Need – Skylar Grey
7. (7) A Kind Of Sorrow – A-lin
8. (6) Solo – Jennie
9. (-) Love Someone – Lukas Graham
10. (9) Dancing With A Stranger – Sam Smith and Normani

• For the week of Jan 30 in Singapore

#### SPOTIFY SINGAPORE

1. (1) 7 Rings – Ariana Grande
2. (2) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
3. (5) Dancing With A Stranger – Sam Smith and Normani
4. (4) Without Me – Halsey
5. (3) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
6. (-) I'm So Tired – Lauv and Troye Sivan
7. (7) Way Back Home – Shaun, Conor Maynard and Sam Feldt
8. (6) A Kind Of Sorrow – A-lin
9. (8) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
10. (10) Saturday Nights – Khalid

• For the week ending Jan 30

#### BILLBOARD

1. (2) Without Me – Halsey
2. (1) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
3. (4) Sicko Mode – Travis Scott
4. (5) High Hopes – Panic! At The Disco
5. (3) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
6. (6) Happier – Marshmello and Bastille
7. (7) Girls Like You – Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B
8. (8) Drip Too Hard – Lil Baby and Gunna
9. (11) Wow. – Post Malone
10. (10) Zeze – Kodak Black featuring Travis Scott and Offset

• For the week of Jan 26

#### HIT FM

1. (8) Talent – Joker Xue
2. (1) Ugly Beauty – Jolin Tsai
3. (-) A Half Is Me – Chen Linong
4. (3) An Addiction To Staying Up Late – Don Chu
5. (17) Kisses For The World – Tanya Chua
6. (2) Resurgence – JJ Lin
7. (6) Forever Young – Eve Ai
8. (10) Fake Monk – Khalil Fong
9. (11) New Species – Chris Lee
10. (-) Half A Life – Ashin

• For the week ending Jan 20

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Telemad

# Men and the monsters inside



VIEW IT / KINGDOM

Netflix  
★★★★☆

IN FAMILY WE TRUST

Netflix  
★★★★☆

Kim Sung-kyu in South Korean series Kingdom, where a mysterious plague breaks out among impoverished villagers. PHOTO: NETFLIX

**Zombies are the star of South Korean period drama Kingdom, while Thai mystery drama In Family We Trust explores greed and wickedness**



Yip Wai Yee  
Entertainment  
Correspondent

South Korean series **Kingdom** is a lavish zombie period drama set in the Joseon Dynasty. Sound familiar?

That is probably because this Netflix original comes less than three months after Rampant (2018), a South Korean blockbuster film about, well, zombies in the Joseon Dynasty.

But that is where the similarities end because Kingdom is a far superior work.

It focuses on the very thing that Rampant had ironically overlooked – the zombies. The period movie starring A-listers Hyun Bin and Jang Dong-gun had been so caught up in the machinations of court politics that it sometimes forgot it had a zombie problem to deal with.

In Kingdom, however, the zombies rightfully take centre stage and they are incredible to look at.

Dressed in traditional Korean costumes, the zombies transform and hunt extremely quickly, which leaves little time for victims to escape. The undead army does appear to have a weakness though – it is much less active in the day.

It would be a major spoiler to reveal how the zombie virus first spread among impoverished villagers, but suffice to say the scene detailing it is both horrific and satisfying to watch.



The occasional moment of original writing like this (the screenwriter is Kim Eun-hee, who also wrote the compelling 2016 police drama Signal) helps set the show apart from others in the saturated genre.

Such scenes also give the show the jolt it needs to keep viewers tuned in because much of it is a slow burn.

As the crown prince (played by Ju Ji-hoon) sets out to tackle the

mysterious plague and the villainous chief state councillor (played by Ryu Seung-ryong) continues his schemes to overthrow the royal family, there is a lot of unnecessary brooding and talking that takes away from the fun.

The first season is made up of only six episodes though, so it does not require too much commitment. Here is hoping that the producers work out the pacing

in time for the second season.

Another series requiring a bit of patience is Thai mystery drama **In Family We Trust**.

The 18-episode show was one of the biggest television hits in Thailand last year – and one of the most popular topics of discussion on social media there – but it has only just been subtitled for international audiences and added to the Netflix library.

The story is centred on the

illustrious Jiraanan family, who run a chain of successful hotels in Bangkok and Pattaya. The multi-generational family appear to have picture-perfect lives – they are rich, tight-knit and, as with most Thai productions, good-looking enough to pass off as fashion models.

Things take a grim turn when a family member is found murdered in his bedroom.

Suddenly, everyone else, including the victim's wife, has to work to prove his or her innocence.

It takes two hour-long episodes before the death takes place. Until then, the viewer has to sit through the lengthy set-up as every character shows biases and allies form within the big family.

The show often veers towards soap-opera melodrama – with shouting, close-up shots of ugly crying and scandalous plot twists involving adultery and possibly even incest.

Where the series succeeds is its examination of human greed and wickedness, even within the same family, when one is desperate to protect his reputation.

Ultimately, it does not make them much more different than the monsters infecting the lands in Kingdom.

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## Strike Back's latest season shot entirely in Malaysia

Benson Ang

In the latest season of television series Strike Back, the glimmering Petronas Twin Towers and the iconic Kuala Lumpur Tower dominate the backdrop of some scenes.

After all, the action-adventure drama's sixth season, which premiered last Saturday, is shot entirely in Malaysia.

And for Britain-born actor Jamie Bamber, 45, who plays Colonel Alexander Coltrane, the new commanding officer of a team of covert special-ops soldiers, filming there for six months presented both joys and challenges, such as having to brave the heat and humidity.

On the show, the soldiers are sent to investigate when a Russian bomber crashes into the South China Sea.

Speaking to journalists on Monday in a group telephone interview from London, where he lives, Bamber said that while it was his first experience shooting in Malaysia, he had visited the country as an 18-year-old backpacker.

"It is impressive to see how much the economy has changed," he said, but added that there is a downside to this.

Noting the abundance of high-rise buildings, he said: "There were places which I saw the first time that were gone... but it is the way of global capitalism."

For the father of three teenage daughters, being in South-east Asia gave him the chance to see proboscis monkeys and orang utans in Borneo and spend a week in Vietnam with his family.

The husband of English actress Kerry Norton said: "Those personal moments shared with my kids were very special indeed."

"They remind me on a daily basis that they miss Malaysia and they wish they can go back."

A newcomer to the cast, Bamber also spent time with his fellow cast members, including English actor Warren Brown and Australian actors Daniel MacPherson and Alin Sumarwata. In particular, he spent many an evening enjoying the food and bars of Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore with Brown, he said.

On the show, the trio play his unruly subordinates, whose ill-disciplined ways create tension between them and him.

But Bamber said this friction is on-screen only.

"Off-screen, they are all wonderful fun. They were very welcoming and I was in awe of them."

"Warren had a career as a muay thai boxer. Dan is an amazing triathlete. And I have watched Alin strip an AK-47 or M40 rifle down to its bare bones and (put it) back again... without even thinking about it."

"We all got on super well," he said, adding that the glue and love among the core characters is the most important part of the show.

"It is about putting yourself in the line of fire for one of your colleagues and never leaving anyone behind."

• Strike Back airs on Saturdays at 11am on Cinemax (StarHub TV Channel 611). It is also available on HBO Go and HBO On Demand (StarHub TV Channel 602).



English actor Jamie Bamber joins the sixth season of action-adventure drama Strike Back as the new commanding officer of a team of covert special-ops soldiers. PHOTO: HBO



Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

**AM**  
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (V)  
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)  
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)  
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)  
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)  
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
**PM**  
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)  
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)  
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)  
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)  
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)  
2.30 On The Red Dot – Old Enough! (CC) (CA)  
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)  
4.00 Make You Laugh Out Loud 3 (V)  
4.30 Survivor 36 (PG) (V)  
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)  
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)  
7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (PG) (V)  
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 News 5 (HD)  
9.30 Talking Point Specials (CA)  
10.00 The Resident (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.00 NCIS 14 (HD) (PG13) (D)  
**AM**  
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)  
12.30 Code Of Law 4 (PG13) (D)  
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)  
2.20 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG) (D)  
3.10 Grimm 5 (PG13) (D)  
4.10 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)  
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)  
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

**AM**  
6.00 Golden Age Talentime (CC) (V)  
7.00 Sidewalk Scientist (IE)  
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (News)  
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 Morning Express (News)  
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 Fruit, Veggies & Me 2 (CC) (IE)  
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)  
**PM**  
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)  
1.00 News 8 At One  
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)  
2.00 Little Counsellor (HD) (S)  
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)  
3.30 Golden Melody (V)  
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)  
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D) (Finale)  
6.30 Hello Singapore (CA)  
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)  
8.00 Remembering Aloysius (IE)  
8.30 Unusual School (IE)  
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)  
10.00 News Tonight  
10.30 Focus (CC) (CA)  
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)  
**AM**  
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)  
1.00 Chef Apprentice (V)  
2.00 A Time To Dance (D)  
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

**PM**  
3.00 Unique Lodging (CC) (IE)  
4.00 The Food Detectives (IE)  
4.30 Working Golden Holidays (IE)  
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)  
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)  
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 World Food (CC) (IE)  
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.00 News Tonight  
11.30 World Food (CC) (IE)  
**AM**  
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)  
2.30 Close

CNA

**AM**  
6.00 Singapore Tonight  
7.00 First Look Asia  
9.00 Asia Business First  
10.02 Becoming Singapore  
11.00 News Now  
**PM**  
1.02 Champions For Change

2.00 News Now  
4.02 Becoming Singapore  
5.00 News Now  
7.02 Raffles Revealed (CC)  
8.00 Primetime Asia  
9.02 Insight (CC)  
10.00 Singapore Tonight  
11.02 Champions For Change  
**AM**  
12.00 News Now  
12.30 Power List Asia 5  
1.02 Insight  
2.00 News Now  
2.30 The Successors 6  
3.02 Becoming Singapore  
4.00 News Now  
4.30 Millionaire Minds 2  
5.02 Insight

VASANTHAM

**PM**  
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)  
3.30 Aasai Aasaiya – Cooking For Love (IE)  
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)  
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (V)  
5.30 Motu Patlu 3 (S)  
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (D) (Hindi)  
7.00 Slackers Shockers Suits & Superheroes (CC) (IE)  
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)  
9.00 Kanavu Meipada 2 (CC) (IE)  
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)  
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)  
11.30 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CA)  
**AM**  
12.00 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)  
12.30 Close

OKTO

**AM**  
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)  
9.30 Teddies (P)  
10.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)  
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)  
11.00 Mouk (P)  
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)  
**PM**  
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)  
12.30 Teddies (HD) (P)  
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)

1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)  
2.00 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)  
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)  
3.00 Mouk (P)  
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)  
4.00 Odd Bods (S)  
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)  
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)  
5.30 Marcus Level (S)  
6.00 OddBods (HD) (S)  
6.30 Fableicious (HD) (S)  
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (CC) (S)  
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)  
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)  
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)  
9.00 ITTF World Tour – Hungarian Open 2019 (Sports)  
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)  
**AM**  
12.00 Close

SURIA

**PM**  
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)  
5.00 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (PG) (CC) (D)  
6.00 Kisah Kita (S)  
6.30 Siapa Master? (CC) (IE)  
7.00 Maklum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)  
8.00 Berita (News)  
8.30 Bangkit (PG) (CC) (IE)  
9.30 Ti Amo, Sweetheart 100 Hari! (PG) (CC) (D) (Finale)  
10.30 InstaGeram (PG) (CC) (D)  
11.30 Berita (News) (R)  
**AM**  
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;  
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;  
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;  
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;  
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;  
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

**AM**  
8.00 Storage Wars 10  
8.30 Pawn Stars 18  
9.30 Ancient Aliens 10  
10.25 History Drama: Project Blue Book  
**PM**  
12.15 Lone Star Restoration  
1.10 The Pickers 11  
2.05 Pawn Stars 18  
2.35 Storage Wars: Miami  
3.00 Storage Wars 10  
3.30 History Drama: Project Blue Book  
5.20 Ancient Aliens 10  
6.15 The Pickers 11  
7.10 Pawn Stars 18  
8.05 Storage Wars: Miami  
8.30 Storage Wars 10  
9.00 Forged In Fire 5  
9.55 History Drama: Vikings 5  
10.50 History Drama: Knightfall  
11.45 Lone Star Restoration

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

**AM**  
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free  
10.00 Project Runway: Fashion Startup  
11.00 Atlanta Plastic  
**PM**  
12.00 Dance Moms 6  
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
2.00 Sea Change  
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4  
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
6.00 Idol Moms  
7.00 This Time Next Year  
8.00 Born This Way 2  
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16  
10.00 Beaches  
11.35 Idol Moms

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

**AM**  
7.20 The Haunted Mansion  
8.45 Training Day  
10.40 U.S. Marshals  
**PM**  
12.50 Lady Bird (NC16)  
2.25 True Detective 3 (NC16)  
3.25 The Red Turtle  
4.50 Leap Year  
6.30 Cars 2  
8.15 Dunkirk  
10.00 Kill Bill: Vol. 2 (M18)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

**AM**  
9.05 Chain Of Fools (NC16)  
10.45 Entrapment  
**PM**  
12.40 The Brits Are Coming! (NC16)  
2.10 Renegades (NC16)  
3.55 Boycott

5.50 John Grisham's The Rainmaker  
8.05 Driven  
10.00 Strike Back 6  
11.00 John Wick: Chapter 2 (M18)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

**AM**  
9.15 Dowry (HD)  
10.15 Chines Restaurant 2 (HD)  
**PM**  
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)  
1.30 Signal (HD)  
2.45 Back To Youth (HD)  
4.15 The Way To Wellness (HD)  
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)  
6.00 Dowry (HD)  
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)  
8.00 Super Boys 2 (HD)  
9.30 Fun Abroad (HD)  
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)  
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

**AM**  
6.00 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018  
7.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ice Dance Short Dance  
**PM**  
12.00 ISU European Figure Skating Championships 2019: Ladies' Free Skating  
4.00 FEI Equestrian World 2018  
4.30 Multi Sport: Action Sports World 2018  
5.30 Tennis: Deuce 2019  
6.00 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered 2019  
6.30 Tennis: 2018 Davis Cup By BNP Paribas Finals: France Vs Croatia Day 1 (Rubber 1 & 2)

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

**AM**  
9.00 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Zhuhai Wolf Warriors Vs Mono Vampire (Same Day Delay)  
11.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
11.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Fiorentina Vs Roma  
**PM**  
1.30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Matches 33 To 36 Semi-finals  
3.00 HSBC World Rugby Sevens World Series 2018/19 Round 3 Hamilton: Matches 37 To 40 Semi-finals  
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)  
7.00 Fiba World Basketball 2019  
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)  
9.30 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Atalanta Vs Juventus  
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
**AM**  
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)  
2.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV  
3.00 Magazine: Trans World Sport 2019  
3.55 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Quarter-finals Inter Milan Vs Lazio (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

**AM**  
10.00 We Bare Bears  
10.30 Supernooobs  
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls  
**PM**  
12.00 Teen Titans Go!  
1.00 We Bare Bears  
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu  
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls  
3.00 Running Man Animation  
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball  
4.00 We Bare Bears  
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls  
5.00 Teen Titans Go!  
5.30 Ben 10  
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches  
6.30 Running Man Animation  
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show  
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings  
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe  
8.00 We Bare Bears  
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls  
10.00 Regular Show  
10.30 Steven Universe  
11.00 Clarence  
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

**AM**  
6.00 MacGyver 2  
6.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior  
7.30 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
8.15 The Elements: Cosentino  
9.05 American Ninja Warrior 8  
9.55 MacGyver 2  
10.45 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 3  
11.35 Carnage  
**PM**  
12.25 Cyril's Family Vacation: Hawaii Edition  
1.25 The Elements: Cosentino  
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 8  
3.05 Carnage  
3.55 MacGyver 2  
4.45 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior  
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 8  
6.25 Seal Team 2  
7.15 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2  
8.05 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders  
9.45 MacGyver 3  
10.35 The International (2009)

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

**AM**  
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect  
6.50 Top 20 Funniest  
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow  
8.30 Supergirl 2  
9.20 The Flash 3  
10.10 The Carbonaro Effect  
11.00 Top 20 Funniest 2  
11.50 Lethal Weapon 3  
**PM**  
12.40 Race To The Scene

1.25 The Big Bang Theory 9  
1.45 Friends 9  
2.20 The Carbonaro Effect  
3.10 Top 20 Funniest 2  
3.55 The Flash 3  
4.45 Supergirl 2  
5.35 Top 20 Funniest  
6.25 The Flash 3  
7.15 The Big Bang Theory 9  
7.35 Friends 9  
8.10 Top 20 Funniest 2  
9.00 Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice  
11.45 The Big Bang Theory 9

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

**AM**  
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2  
6.25 The Daily Show 24  
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 12  
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
7.40 Mr Bean  
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 3  
8.35 Most Ridiculous 2  
9.05 Billy On The Street 5  
9.30 Takeshi's Castle 4  
9.55 Mr Bean  
10.25 Most Ridiculous 2  
10.50 Almost Royals 2  
11.15 Saturday Night Live 43  
**PM**  
12.00 The Daily Show 24  
12.25 The Goldbergs 5  
1.15 Hot In Cleveland 6  
2.05 Back To School Special  
2.55 Takeshi's Castle 4  
3.20 Most Ridiculous 2  
3.45 The Goldbergs 5  
4.35 Hot In Cleveland 6  
5.25 The Jim Jefferies Show  
5.50 The Daily Show 24  
6.15 Caraoke Showdown  
7.00 Your Face Or Mine 3  
7.25 Most Ridiculous 2  
7.50 Billy On The Street 5  
8.10 Takeshi's Castle 4  
8.35 The Goldbergs 5  
9.25 Hot In Cleveland 6  
10.15 Inglorious Pranksters  
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2  
10.55 The Fuccons  
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show  
11.25 The Fuccons

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

**AM**  
6.00 Taste Of Love  
7.00 First Love  
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age  
9.00 Eagle And Youngster  
10.00 100% Wife  
**PM**  
12.10 First Love  
1.00 In The Name Of Love  
2.00 100% Wife  
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age  
5.00 First Love  
6.00 In The Name Of Love  
7.00 100% Wife  
9.10 First Love  
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age  
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

TheStarsSay

**Aries** (March 21 - April 19)

Do not worry about what you can see and hear – it is the stuff going on behind your back that is important.

**Taurus** (April 20 - May 20)

Firm up your plans for a vacation. Your energy is perfect for taking care of details.

**Gemini** (May 21 - June 20)

You are not clear about something new and you may be called on to act on it. Let your instincts guide you.

**Cancer** (June 21 - July 22)

Keep both eyes open – that awareness can make all the difference between success and failure.

**Leo** (July 23 - Aug 22)

Treat everyone like a VIP and they are likely to return the favour just when you need the boost.

**Virgo** (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Whether you are single and looking or already have a partner, you should find it easier to kindle new sparks.

**Libra** (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Your home life feels off-kilter and you almost certainly need to do something about it.

**Scorpio** (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Your business acumen is peaking, so start something new, ask for a raise or improve your position.

**Sagittarius** (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Material possessions feel more burdensome now. Try your best to free yourself from the worst of it.

**Capricorn** (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

You hit the nail right on the head and impress the right people. Enjoy the attention you deserve.

**Aquarius** (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Keep a steady hand on the tiller, even if you have no idea where you are. Things will become clearer soon.

**Pisces** (Feb 19 - March 20)

Find a leader quickly. You are able to switch directions, but without guidance, it could go haywire.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

**AM**  
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning  
10.00 Carol Smith  
**PM**  
1.00 Charmaine Yee  
4.00 Shan Wee  
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

**AM**  
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman  
10.00 Cheryl Miles  
**PM**  
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

**AM**  
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang  
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim  
**PM**  
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro  
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

**AM**  
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu  
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin  
**PM**  
1.00 Tea With Yuling  
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weillong  
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

**AM**  
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi  
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna  
**PM**  
1.00 Automation  
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian  
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7:17am/7:20pm  
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 3:25am/3:45pm

**TIDES TODAY:** Singapore: 1.26am (1.7m), 7.24am (2.6m), 2.43pm (0.9m), 10pm (2.4m). Desaru: 1.33am (1.9m), 6.26am (2.4m), 1.48pm (1.1m), 9.43pm (2.5m). Port Dickson: 3.45am (2m), 10.37pm (2.6m). Port Dickson: 4.53am (2.2m), 11.51am (0.8m), 5.23pm (1.8m), 11.32pm (0.5m). Mersing: 3.13am (2.2m), 6.06am (2.3m), 1.47pm (1.2m), 12.52pm (1.2m), 8.53pm (2.9m).

**TIDES TOMORROW:** Singapore: 2.52am (1.8m), 8.37am (2.6m), 3.41pm (0.8m), 10.54pm (2.5m). Desaru: 2.56am (2m), 7.22am (2.3m), 2.45pm (1m), 10.37pm (2.6m). Port Dickson: 4.53am (2.2m), 11.51am (0.8m), 5.23pm (1.8m), 11.32pm (0.5m). Mersing: 3.13am (2.2m), 6.06am (2.3m), 1.47pm (1.2m), 9.43pm (3m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg



## Obituary

# Ingram a defining voice of 1980s R&B

NEW YORK • James Ingram, whose voice – technically precise, crisp and reserved, yet full of audacious feeling – made him one of the defining singers of R&B in the 1980s, has died. He was 66.

Actress and choreographer Debbie Allen, a frequent collaborator with Ingram on musical theatre projects, announced his death on Twitter on Tuesday, calling him her “dearest friend and creative partner”. She did not say where or when he died or specify the cause.

Just as R&B’s “quiet storm” phase was peaking, Ingram was plucked from side-gig obscurity by producer Quincy Jones to appear on his 1981 album, *The Dude*.

Jones discovered Ingram on a demo of *Just Once*, written by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, which he sang for US\$50. Jones loved not just the song, but the singer as well, and he called Ingram and invited him to perform *Just Once* and another

song, *One Hundred Ways*, on that album.

Both songs became huge hits, cracking the Top 20 of the *Billboard* Hot 100. *One Hundred Ways* earned Ingram a Grammy in 1982 for best male R&B vocal performance.

Up until Jones rang him up, Ingram had been content in the background. “I was never no singer; I never shopped a deal, none of that,” he told *The Chicago Tribune* in 2012.

But his voice – austere, luscious, commanding – was foreground material. His music was gentlemanly and romantic, the aural equivalent of being courted.

Ingram was born on Feb 16, 1952, and raised in Akron, Ohio. He sang in a church choir – his father was a deacon – and taught himself to play piano. After high school, he passed up a track scholarship to focus on music, eventually moving to Los Angeles.

When Jones discovered him, Ingram had been inching his way into the music business for about a decade. He had been a pianist for Ray Charles; played in a band, *Revelation Funk*, which contributed a song to the soundtrack of the 1975 movie *Dolemite*; played in one of Dick Clark’s support bands; and done side work as a demo singer.

After the success of *Just Once* and *One Hundred Ways*, Ingram became a force in R&B.

In 1982 he recorded a duet with Patti Austin, *Baby, Come To Me*, which reached No. 1 on the *Hot 100*. In 1983, he released his first solo album, *It’s Your Night*, which featured several hits, including another duet with Austin, *How Do You Keep The Music Playing?*, and *Yah Mo B There*, a duet with Michael McDonald that earned Ingram his second Grammy, in 1985. He was nominated 14 times.

Throughout the 1980s, he worked

with Jones on several other projects: participating in the all-star charity single *We Are The World*; writing for the soundtrack of Steven Spielberg’s film *The Color Purple* (1985); singing on Jones’ 1989 album, *Back On The Block*; and, most crucially, writing, with Jones, Michael Jackson’s 1983 Top 10 hit *P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)*.

“It’s almost like I got the chance to go to Oz and Quincy was the Wizard of Oz and Michael Jackson was who he was dealing with in his world,” Ingram told *Jet* magazine in 2007.

In a statement, Jones said: “There are no words to convey how much my heart aches with the news of the passing of my baby brother James Ingram. With that soulful, whiskey-sounding voice, James Ingram was simply magical.”

Ingram’s survivors include his wife, Debra, whom he married in 1975. NYTIMES

Singer James Ingram was nominated for the Grammys 14 times. He won twice. PHOTO: REUTERS



## MJ estate denounces film alleging sexual abuse

LOS ANGELES • A documentary set to air on HBO this spring explores allegations by two men who say Michael Jackson sexually abused them as boys.

In a strongly worded statement, the late singer’s estate has rebutted the claims, calling the documentary “tabloid character assassination”.

Leaving *Neverland* drew strong reactions after premiering last Friday at the Sundance Film Festival. Mr Wade Robson and Mr James Safechuck, the men accusing Jackson, received a standing ovation at the Park City, Utah, screening.

The four-hour film, directed by Dan Reed, details claims from Mr Robson, a choreographer who says Jackson began abusing him when he was seven, and Mr Safechuck, a former child actor who says Jackson began molesting him when he was 10. Both men allege years of sexual abuse, which they say took place at *Neverland Ranch*. They said they faced pressure from Jackson to keep the abuse a secret.

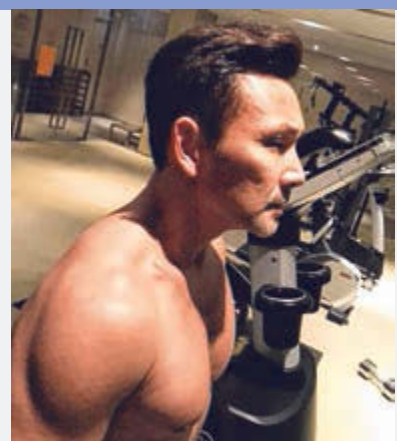
In its statement after the premiere, Jackson’s estate said “the film takes uncorroborated allegations that supposedly happened 20 years ago and treats them as fact”.

The statement continued: “These claims were the basis of lawsuits filed by these two admitted liars which were ultimately dismissed by a judge. The two accusers testified under oath that these events never occurred. They have provided no independent evidence and absolutely no proof in support of their accusations.”

Jackson’s family released a separate statement on Monday, calling the documentary a “public lynching”.

It added: “The creators of this film were not interested in the truth. They never interviewed a single solitary soul who knew Michael except the two perjurers and their families. That is not journalism and it’s not fair.” WASHINGTON POST

### On social media



For many men entering middle age, a bulging tummy and receding hairline are among their biggest concerns. But Hong Kong actor Frankie Lam, 51, shows no signs of those. He is beefing up his body for a TV series and his wife, actress Xenix Kwok (both left), 49, is so enamoured of his physique that she shared a topless photo of him (above) on Weibo.

Writing in Chinese that Lam has been working out for at least two hours a day in the past two months, she adds that she admires his perseverance. Lam thanked his wife for her public praise, replying: “One has to respect himself first if he wants others to respect him. I have always respected my profession, so I will work hard to train myself and do my best.”

They became a couple after acting in the 1995 TVB serial *Down Memory Lane* and married in 2004. They have a daughter, aged nine. PHOTOS: WEIBO/XENIX KWOK

## Universal pledges to hire female director

LOS ANGELES • Universal Pictures, part of Comcast, became the first major movie studio to commit to the “4% Challenge”, a bid to rectify the lack of female directors in Hollywood.

As part of the campaign, which refers to the percentage of films directed by women over the past decade, the studio said it plans to work with at least one female director on a feature film in the next 18 months.

The challenge was kicked off at the Sundance Film Festival this year by producer Nina Jacobson and director Paul Feig, among others. The move is part of a broader push by the entertainment industry to diversify its ranks, long dominated by white men.

But the progress has been particularly slow in Hollywood’s directors chairs. This year, no women were nominated for the best directing Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

While hiring one woman in 18 months may not seem like a huge step, it is a sign of progress in an industry where movies are planned years ahead.

“This is big,” Ms Melissa Silverstein, founder and publisher of *Women And Hollywood*, said on Twitter after the announcement. “This is a studio pledging to work with women.” BLOOMBERG

## Malkovich to play Weinstein-like character on stage

LONDON • Barney Fein is a depraved Hollywood mogul – “a bloated monster” – whose fall from grace can be seen in London’s West End starting in June. He is also based in part on disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

*Bitter Wheat*, written and directed by David Mamet and starring John Malkovich, will open at Garrick Theatre in London on June 7 for a limited run, the theatre announced on Tuesday. Mamet wrote the play in response to the #MeToo allegations against Weinstein and others in Hollywood, the theatre said.

On Tuesday, Malkovich told BBC radio that he expected “a lot of people” not to like the work, which he called a “black farce”.

“Of course, it might upset people who’ve experienced the kind of treatment that the play describes and that we watch,” he said. “But what can I do about that? I think it’s a terrific piece of writing.”

Asked if comedy was a suitable genre for discussing such issues, he said: “A lot of great plays elicit the question, ‘Do I laugh or do I cry?’ And I think a lot of great comedy exists at the crossroads between pain and farce.” NYTIMES

## Starry line-up for Berlin film festival

BERLIN • New movies starring Diane Kruger, Martin Freeman and Catherine Deneuve and features directed by Hollywood actors Jonah Hill and Casey Affleck will take the spotlight at next month’s Berlin film festival.

The 11-day Berlinale, in its 69th year, figures along with Cannes and Venice among Europe’s A-list festivals. It will present about 400 movies from around the world before wrapping up on Feb 17.

This year’s edition will be the last led by Mr Dieter Kosslick, 70, who is handing over the reins after 18 years. “The audio-visual world is in major, major turmoil and we’ll have to see where the journey takes us,” he said, referring to competition from streaming giants such as Netflix. “But I think in future, film festivals will be more important than ever because you will see

movies you can’t see anywhere else (on a big screen). I think they (streaming and festivals) will coexist.”

Seventeen films will vie for the Berlinale’s Golden and Silver Bear prizes, including a record seven by female directors such as Polish veteran Agnieszka Holland and Denmark’s Lone Scherfig (*An Education*, 2009). Scherfig will open the festival next Thursday with the drama, *The Kindness Of Strangers*, starring Zoe Kazan and Bill Nighy.

French star Juliette Binoche will lead a jury including Oscar winner Sebastian Lelio of Chile (*A Fantastic Woman*, 2017), British actress-director-producer Trudie Styler, Museum of Modern Art curator Rajendra Roy and German actress Sandra Hueller (Toni Erdmann, 2016). AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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